



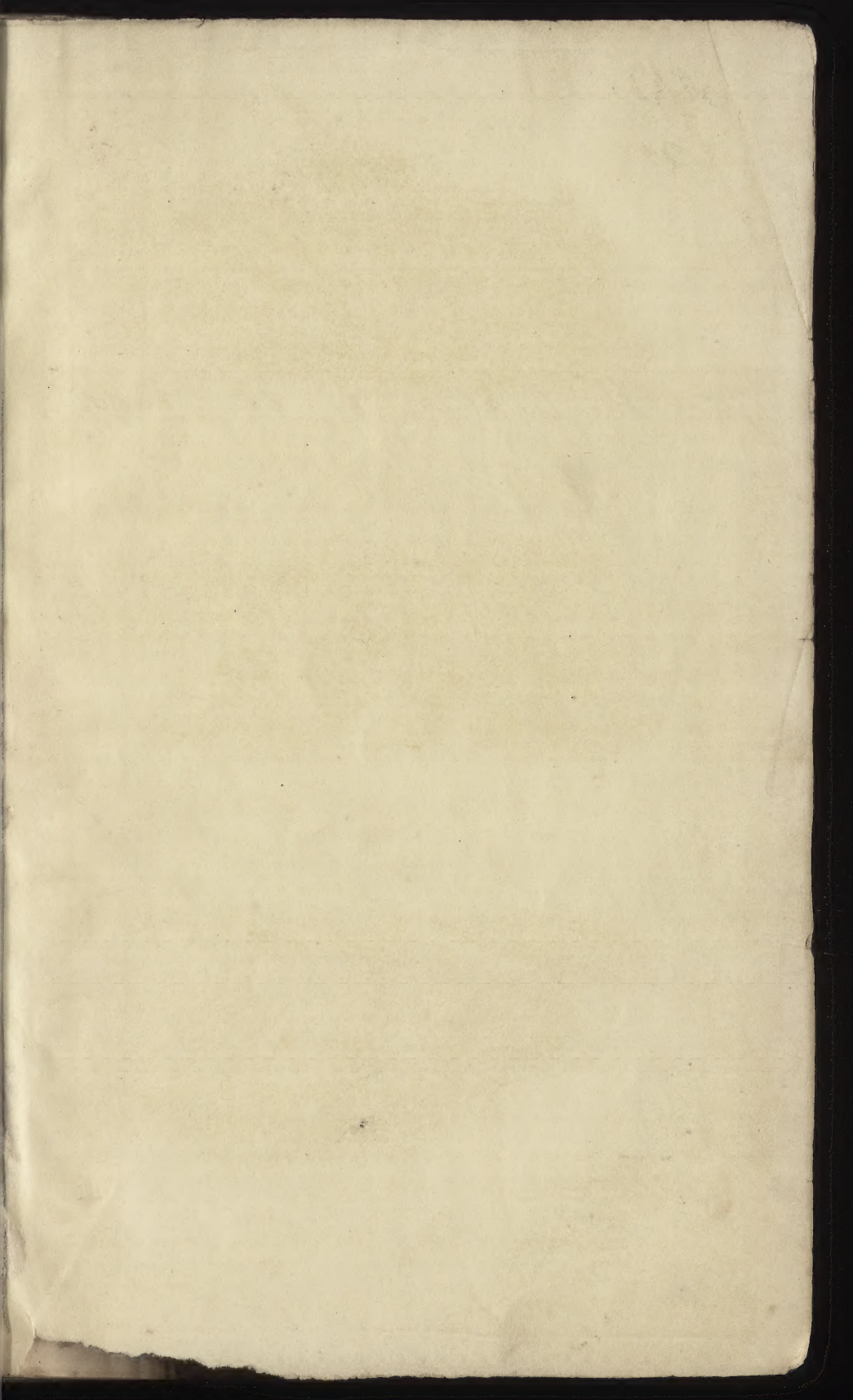
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LONDON

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1850

MODERN PAINTERS:

THEIR SUPERIORITY

IN THE ART OF LANDSCAPE PAINTING

TO ALL

THE ANCIENT MASTERS

PROVED BY EXAMPLES OF

The True, the Beautiful, and the Intellectual,

FROM THE

WORKS OF MODERN ARTISTS,

ESPECIALLY

FROM THOSE OF J. M. W. TURNER, ESQ., R.A.

~~~~~  
BY A GRADUATE OF OXFORD.

~~~~~ John Ruskin.

Of arrogance, "Accuse me not
If, having walked with nature, . . .
And offered, far as frailty would allow,
My heart a daily sacrifice to Truth,
I now affirm of Nature and of Truth,
Whom I have served, that their Divinity
Revolts, offended at the ways of men,
Philosophers, who, though the human soul
Be of a thousand faculties composed,
And twice ten thousand interests, do yet prize
This soul, and the transcendent universe
No more than as a mirror that reflects
To proud Self-love her own intelligence."

WORDSWORTH.

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—
1843.

MODERN PAINTERS:

THEIR WORKS

AND THE ART OF PAINTING

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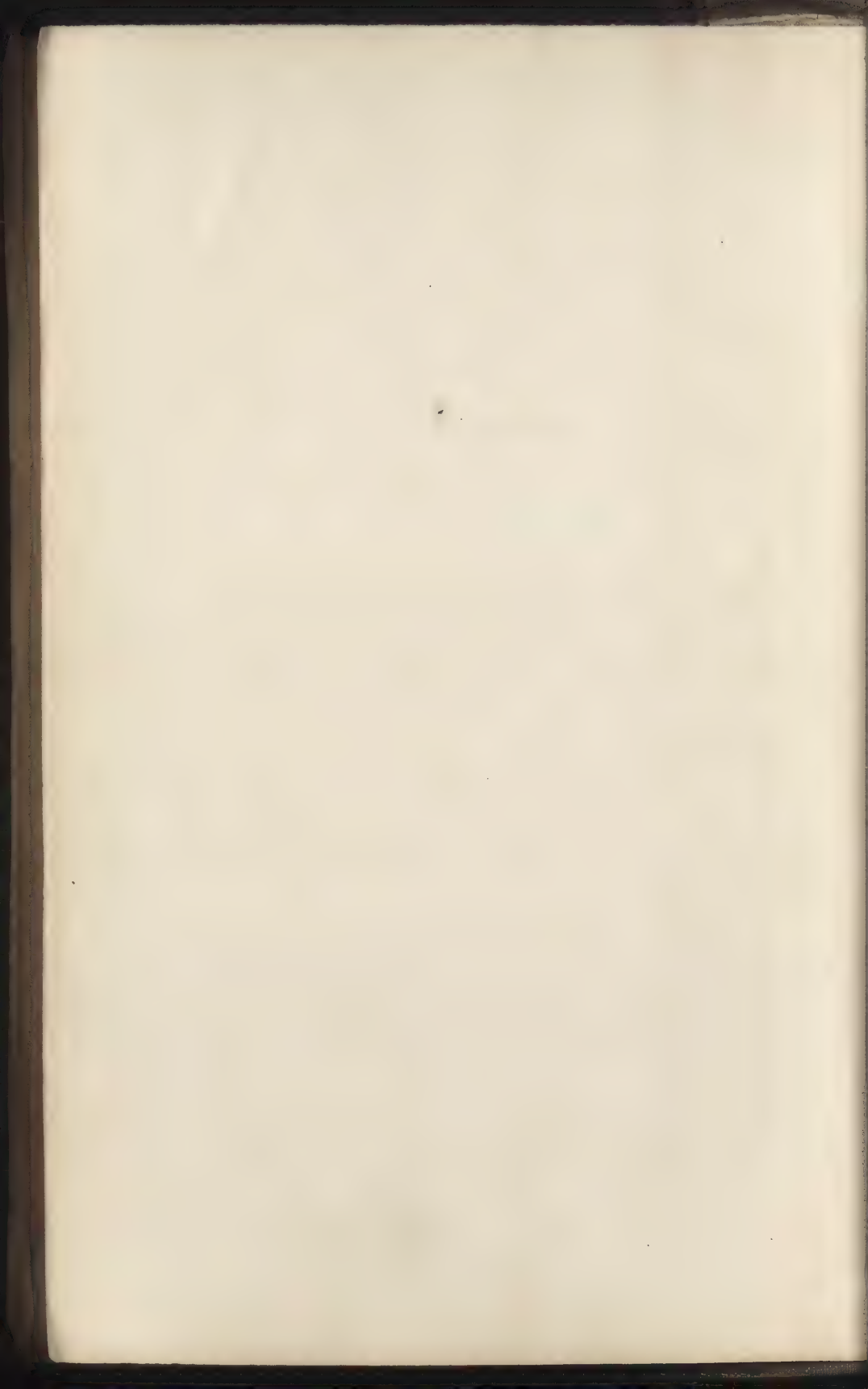
TO THE
LANDSCAPE ARTISTS OF ENGLAND,

This Work

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY THEIR SINCERE ADMIRER,

THE AUTHOR.



PREFACE.

THE work now laid before the public originated in indignation at the shallow and false criticisms of the periodicals of the day on the works of the great living artist to whom it principally refers. It was intended to be a short pamphlet, reprobating the matter and style of those critiques, and pointing out their perilous tendency, as guides of public feeling. But, as point after point presented itself for demonstration, I found myself compelled to amplify what was at first a letter to the Editor of a Review, into something very like a treatise on art, to which I was obliged to give the more consistency and completeness, because it advocated opinions which, to the ordinary connoisseur, will sound heretical. I now scarcely know whether I should announce it as an Essay on Landscape Painting, and apologize for its frequent reference to the works of a particular master; or, announcing it as a critique on particular works, apologize for its lengthy discussion of ge-

neral principles. But of whatever character the work may be considered, the motives which led me to undertake it must not be mistaken. No zeal for the reputation of any individual, no personal feeling of any kind, has the slightest weight or influence with me. The reputation of the great artist to whose works I have chiefly referred, is established on too legitimate grounds among all whose admiration is honourable, to be in any way affected by the ignorant sarcasms of pretension and affectation. But when *public* taste seems plunging deeper and deeper into degradation day by day, and when the press universally exerts such power as it possesses to direct the feeling of the nation more completely to all that is theatrical, affected and false in art; while it vents its ribald buffooneries on the most exalted truth, and the highest ideal of landscape, that this or any other age has ever witnessed, it becomes the imperative duty of all who have any perception or knowledge of what is really great in art, and any desire for its advancement in England, to come fearlessly forward, regardless of such individual interests as are likely to be injured by the knowledge of what is good and right, to declare and demonstrate, wherever they exist, the essence and the authority of the Beautiful and the True.

Whatever may seem invidious or partial in the execution of my task is dependent not so much on the tenour of the work, as on its incompleteness.

I have not entered into systematic criticism of all the painters of the present day ; but I have illustrated each particular excellence and truth of art by the works in which it exists in the highest degree, resting satisfied that if it be once rightly felt and enjoyed in these, it will be discovered and appreciated wherever it exists in others. And although I have never suppressed any conviction of the superiority of one artist over another, which I believed to be grounded on truth, and necessary to the understanding of truth, I have been cautious never to undermine positive rank, while I disputed relative rank. My uniform desire and aim has been, not that the present favourite should be admired less, but that the neglected master should be admired more. And I know that an increased perception and sense of truth and beauty, though it may interfere with our estimate of the comparative rank of painters, will invariably tend to increase our admiration of all who are really great ; and he who now places Stanfield and Callcott above Turner, will admire Stanfield and Callcott more than he does now, when he has learned to place Turner far above them both.

In three instances only have I spoken in direct depreciation of the works of living artists, and these are all cases in which the reputation is so firm and extended, as to suffer little injury from the opinion of an individual, and where the blame has been

warranted and deserved by the desecration of the highest powers.

Of the old masters I have spoken with far greater freedom; but let it be remembered that only a portion of the work is now presented to the public, and it must not be supposed, because in that particular portion, and with reference to particular excellencies, I have spoken in constant depreciation, that I have no feeling of other excellencies of which cognizance can only be taken in future parts of the work. Let me not be understood to mean more than I have said, nor be made responsible for conclusions when I have only stated facts. I have said that the old masters did not give the truth of Nature; if the reader chooses, thence, to infer that they were not masters at all, it is his conclusion, not mine.

Whatever I have asserted throughout the work, I have endeavoured to ground altogether on demonstrations which must stand or fall by their own strength, and which ought to involve no more reference to authority or character than a demonstration in Euclid. Yet it is proper for the public to know, that the writer is no mere theorist, but has been devoted from his youth to the laborious study of practical art.

Whatever has been generally affirmed of the old

schools of landscape-painting is founded on familiar acquaintance with every important work of art, from Antwerp to Naples. But it would be useless, where close and immediate comparison with works in our own Academy is desirable, to refer to the details of pictures at Rome or Munich; and it would be impossible to speak at once with just feeling, as regarded the possessor; and just freedom, as regarded the public, of pictures in private galleries. Whatever particular references have been made for illustration, have been therefore confined, as far as was in my power, to works in the National and Dulwich Galleries.

Finally, I have to apologise for the imperfection of a work which I could have wished not to have executed, but with years of reflection and revisal. It is owing to my sense of the necessity of such revisal, that only a portion of the work is now presented to the public; but that portion is both complete in itself, and is more peculiarly directed against the crying evil which called for instant remedy. Whether I ever completely fulfil my intention, will partly depend upon the spirit in which the present volume is received. If it be attributed to an invidious spirit, or a desire for the advancement of individual interests, I could hope to effect little good by farther effort. If, on the contrary, its real feeling and intention be understood, I shall shrink from no labour in the execution of a task

which may tend, however feebly, to the advancement of the cause of real art in England, and to the honour of those great living Masters whom we now neglect or malign, to pour our flattery into the ear of Death, and exalt, with vain acclamation, the names of those who neither demand our praise, nor regard our gratitude.

THE AUTHOR.

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MODERN PAINTERS.

PART I. OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

SECTION I. OF THE NATURE OF THE IDEAS CONVEYABLE BY ART.

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTORY.

IF it be true, and it can scarcely be disputed, that nothing has been for centuries consecrated by public admiration, without possessing in a high degree some kind of sterling excellence, it is not because the average intellect and feeling of the majority of the public are competent in any way to distinguish what is really excellent, but because all erroneous opinion is inconsistent, and all ungrounded opinion transitory; so that while the fancies and feelings which deny deserved honour and award what is undue have neither root nor strength sufficient to maintain consistent testimony for a length of time, the opinions formed on right grounds by those few who are in reality competent judges, being necessarily stable, communicate themselves gradually from

§ 1. Public opinion no criterion of excellence, except after long periods of time.

mind to mind, descending lower as they extend wider, until they leaven the whole lump, and rule by absolute authority, even where the grounds and reasons for them cannot be understood. On this gradual victory of what is consistent over what is vacillating, depends the reputation of all that is highest in art and literature. For it is an insult to what is really great in either, to suppose that it in any way addresses itself to mean or uncultivated faculties. It is a matter of the simplest demonstration, that no man can be really appreciated but by his equal or superior. His inferior may overestimate him, in enthusiasm; or, as is more commonly the case, degrade him, in ignorance; but he cannot form a grounded and just estimate. Without proving this, however, which it would take more space to do than I can spare, it is sufficiently evident that there is no process of amalgamation by which opinions, wrong individually, can become right merely by their multitude.* If I stand by a picture in the Academy, and hear twenty persons in succession admiring some paltry bit of mechanism, or imitation in the lining of a cloak, or the satin of a slipper, it is absurd to tell me that they reprobate collectively what they admire individually: or, if they pass with apathy by a piece of the most noble conception or most perfect truth, because it has in it no tricks of the brush nor grimace of expression, it is absurd to tell me that they collectively respect what they separately scorn, or that the feelings and knowledge of such judges, by any length of time or comparison of ideas, could come to any right conclusion with respect to what is really high in art. The question is not decided by them, but for them;—decided at first

* The opinion of a majority is right only when it is more probable with each individual that he should be right than that he should be wrong, as in the case of a jury. Where it is more probable, with respect to each individual, that he should be wrong than right, the opinion of the minority is the true one. Thus it is in art.

by few : by fewer in proportion as the merits of the work are of a higher order. From these few the decision is communicated to the number next below them in rank of mind, and by these again to a wider and lower circle ; each rank being so far cognizant of the superiority of that above it, as to receive its decision with respect ; until, in process of time, the right and consistent opinion is communicated to all, and held by all as a matter of faith, the more positively in proportion as the grounds of it are less perceived.*

* There are, however, a thousand modifying circumstances which render this process sometimes unnecessary,—sometimes rapid and certain—sometimes impossible. It is unnecessary in rhetoric and the drama, because the multitude is the only proper judge of those arts whose end is to move the multitude, (though more is necessary to a fine play than is essentially dramatic, and it is only of the dramatic part that the multitude are cognizant). It is unnecessary, when, united with the higher qualities of a work, there are appeals to universal passion, to all the faculties and feelings which are general in man as an animal. The popularity is then as sudden as it is well grounded,—it is hearty and honest in every mind, but it is based in every mind on a different species of excellence. Such will often be the case with the noblest works of literature. Take *Don Quixote* for example. The lowest mind would find in it perpetual and brutal amusement in the misfortunes of the knight, and perpetual pleasure in sympathy with the squire. A mind of average feeling would perceive the satirical meaning and force of the book, would appreciate its wit, its elegance, and its truth. But only elevated and peculiar minds discover, in addition to all this, the full moral beauty of the love and truth which are the constant associates of all that is even most weak and erring in the character of its hero, and pass over the rude adventure and scurrile jest in haste—perhaps in pain, to penetrate beneath the rusty corslet, and catch from the wandering glance, the evidence and expression of fortitude, self-devotion, and universal love. So again, with the works of Scott and Byron ; popularity was as instant as it was deserved, because there is in them an appeal to those passions which are universal in all men, as well as an expression of such thoughts as can be received only by the few. But they are admired by the majority of their advocates for the weakest parts of their works, as a popular preacher by the majority of his congregation for the worst part of his sermon.

The process is rapid and certain, when, though there may be little to catch the multitude at once, there is much which they can enjoy when their attention is authoritatively directed to it. So rests the reputation

§ 2. And therefore obstinate when once formed.

But when this process has taken place, and the work has become sanctified by time in the minds of men, it is impossible that any new work of equal merit can be impartially compared with it, except by minds not only educated and generally capable of appreciating merit, but strong enough to shake off the weight of prejudice and association, which invariably incline them to the older favourite. It is much easier, says Barry, to repeat the character recorded of Phidias, than to investigate the merits of Agasias. And when, as peculiarly in the case of painting, much knowledge of what is technical and practical is necessary to a right judgment, so that those alone are competent to pronounce a true verdict who are them-

of Shakspeare. No ordinary mind can comprehend wherein his arbitrary and undisputed superiority consists, but there is yet quite as much to amuse, thrill, or excite,—quite as much of what is in the strict sense of the word, dramatic, in his works as in any one else's. They were received, therefore, when first written, with average approval, as works of common merit: but when the high decision was made, and the circle spread, the public took up the hue and cry conscientiously enough. Let them have daggers, ghosts, clowns, and kings, and with such real and definite sources of enjoyment, they will take the additional trouble to learn half-a-dozen quotations, without understanding them, and admit the superiority of Shakspeare without further demur. Nothing, perhaps, can more completely demonstrate the total ignorance of the public of all that is great or valuable in Shakspeare than their universal admiration of Maclise's "Hamlet."

The process is impossible when there is in the work nothing to attract and something to disgust the vulgar mind. Neither their intrinsic excellence, nor the authority of those who can judge of it, will ever make the poems of Wordsworth or George Herbert popular, in the sense in which Scott and Byron are popular, because it is to the vulgar a labour instead of a pleasure to read them; and there are parts in them which to such judges cannot but be vapid or ridiculous. Most works of the highest art,—those of Raffaele, M. Agnolo, or Da Vinci,—stand as Shakspeare does,—that which is commonplace and feeble in their excellence being taken for its essence by the uneducated, imagination assisting the impression, (for we readily fancy that we feel, when feeling is a matter of pride or conscience,) and affectation and pretension increasing the noise of the rapture, if not its degree. Giotto, Cimabue, Fra Bartolomeo, Perugino, stand, like George Herbert, only with the few. Wilkie becomes popular, like Scott, because he touches passions which all feel, and expresses truths which all can recognize.

selves the persons to be judged, and who therefore can give no opinion, centuries may elapse before fair comparison can be made between two artists of different ages; while the patriarchal excellence exercises during the interval a tyrannical—perhaps, even a blighting, influence over the minds, both of the public and of those to whom, properly understood, it should serve for a guide and example. In no city of Europe is painting in so hopeless a state of degradation as in Rome; because there, among all students, the authority of their predecessors in art is supreme and without appeal, and the mindless copyist studies Raffaelle, but not what Raffaelle studied. It thus becomes the duty of every one capable of demonstrating any definite points of superiority in modern art, and who is in a position in which his doing so will not be ungraceful, to encounter without hesitation whatever opprobrium may fall upon him from the necessary prejudice even of the most candid minds, and from the far more virulent opposition of those who have no hope of maintaining their own reputation for discernment but in the support of that kind of consecrated merit which may be applauded without an inconvenient necessity for reasons. It is my purpose, therefore, believing that there are certain points of superiority in modern artists, and especially in one or two of their number, which have not yet been fully understood, except by those who are scarcely in a position admitting the declaration of their conviction, to institute a close comparison between the great works of ancient and modern landscape art, to raise, as far as possible, the deceptive veil of imaginary light through which we are accustomed to gaze upon the patriarchal work, and to show the real relations, whether favourable or otherwise, subsisting between it and our own. I am fully aware that this is not to be done lightly or rashly; that it is the part of every one proposing to undertake such a task, strictly to examine

§ 3. The author's reasons for opposing it in particular instances.

§ 4. But only
on points ca-
pable of de-
monstration.

with prolonged doubt and severe trial, every opinion in any way contrary to the sacred verdict of time, and to advance nothing which does not, at least in his own conviction, rest on surer ground than mere feeling or taste. I have accordingly advanced nothing in the following pages but with accompanying demonstration, which may indeed be true or false—complete or conditional, but which can only be met on its own grounds, and can in no way be borne down or affected by mere authority of great names. Yet even thus I should scarcely have ventured to speak so decidedly as I have, but for my full conviction that in all questions respecting the art of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, we ought not to class the historical and landscape painters together, as possessing any thing like equal rank in their respective walks of art. It is because I look with the most devoted veneration upon M. Angelo, Raffaello, and Da Vinci, that I do not distrust the principles which induce me to look with contempt on Claude, Salvator, and Gaspar Poussin. Had I disliked all, I should have believed in and bowed before all; but in my admiration of the greater, I consider myself as having warrant for the repudiation of the less. I feel assured that they cannot with reason be admired together,—that the principles of art on which they worked are totally opposed, and that the landscape painters of the old school have been honoured only because they had in them a shadow and semblance of the manner of the nobler historical painters, whose principles in all important points they directly reversed. But be this as it may, let it be understood, that whenever hereafter I speak depreciatingly of the old masters as a body, I refer to none of the historical painters, for whom I entertain a veneration, which though I hope reasonable in its grounds, is almost superstitious in degree. Neither, unless he be particularly mentioned, do I intend to include Nicholas

Poussin, whose landscapes have a separate and elevated character, which renders it necessary to consider them apart from all others. Speaking generally of the old masters, I refer only to Claude, Gaspar Poussin, Salvator Rosa, Cuyp, Berghem, Both, Ruysdael, Hobbima, Teniers (in his landscapes), P. Potter, Canaletti, and the various Van somethings, and Back somethings, more especially and malignantly those who have libelled the sea.

It will of course be necessary for me in the commencement of the work to state briefly those principles on which I conceive all right judgment of art must be founded. These introductory chapters I should wish to be read carefully, because all criticism must be useless when the terms or grounds of it are in any degree ambiguous; and the ordinary language of connoisseurs and critics, granting that they understand it themselves, is usually mere jargon to others, from their custom of using technical terms, by which everything is meant and nothing is expressed.

And if, in the application of these principles, in spite of my endeavour to render it impartial, the feeling and fondness which I have for some works of modern art escape me sometimes where it should not, let it be pardoned as little more than a fair counterbalance to that peculiar veneration with which the work of the older master, associated as it has ever been in our ears with the expression of whatever is great or perfect, must be usually regarded by the reader. I do not say that this veneration is wrong, nor that we should be less attentive to the repeated words of time: but let us not forget, that if honour be for the dead, gratitude can only be for the living. He who has once stood beside the grave, to look back upon the companionship which has been for ever closed, feeling how impotent *there* are the wild love, or the keen sorrow, to give one instant's pleasure to the pulseless heart, or atone in the lowest

§ 5. The author's partiality to modern works excusable.

measure to the departed spirit for the hour of unkindness, will scarcely for the future incur that debt to the heart, which can only be discharged to the dust. But the lesson which men receive as individuals, they do not learn as nations. Again and again they have seen their noblest descend into the grave, and have thought it enough to garland the tombstone when they had not crowned the brow, and to pay the honour to the ashes, which they had denied to the spirit. Let it not displease them that they are bidden, amidst the tumult and the dazzle of their busy life, to listen for the few voices, and watch for the few lamps, which God has toned and lighted to charm and to guide them, that they may not learn their sweetness by their silence, nor their light by their decay.

CHAPTER II.

DEFINITION OF GREATNESS IN ART.

IN the 15th Lecture of Sir Joshua Reynolds, incidental notice is taken of the distinction between those excellences in the painter which belong to him *as such*, and those which belong to him in common with all men of intellect, the general and exalted powers of which art is the evidence and expression, not the subject. But the distinction is not there dwelt upon as it should be, for it is owing to the slight attention ordinarily paid to it, that criticism is open to every form of coxcombry, and liable to every phase of error. It is a distinction on which depend all sound judgment of the rank of the artist, and all just appreciation of the dignity of art.

§ 1. Distinction between the painter's intellectual power and technical knowledge.

Painting, or art generally, as such, with all its technicalities, difficulties, and particular ends, is nothing but a noble and expressive language, invaluable as the vehicle of thought, but by itself, nothing. He who has learned what is commonly considered the whole art of painting, that is, the art of representing any natural object faithfully, has as yet only learned the language by which his thoughts are to be expressed. He has done just as much towards being that which we ought to respect as a great painter, as a man who has learned how to express himself grammatically and melodiously has towards being a great poet. The language is, in-

§ 2. Painting, as such, is nothing more than language.

deed, more difficult of acquirement in the one case than in the other, and possesses more power of delighting the sense, while it speaks to the intellect, but it is, nevertheless, nothing more than language, and all those excellences which are peculiar to the painter as such, are merely what rhythm, melody, precision and force are in the words of the orator and the poet, necessary to their greatness, but not the tests of their greatness. It is not by the mode of representing and saying, but by what is represented and said, that the respective greatness either of the painter or the writer is to be finally determined.

§ 3. "Painter,"
a term corresponding to
"versifier."

Speaking with strict propriety, therefore, we should call a man a great painter only as he excelled in precision and force in the language of lines, and a great versifier, as he excelled in precision or force of the language of words. A great poet would then be a term strictly, and in precisely the same sense applicable to both, if warranted by the character of the images or thoughts which each in their respective languages conveyed.

§ 4. Example
in a painting of
E. Landseer's.

Take, for instance, one of the most perfect poems or pictures (I use the word as synonymous) which modern times have seen:—the "Old Shepherd's chief-mourner." Here the exquisite execution of the glossy and crisp hair of the dog, the bright sharp touching of the green bough beside it, the clear painting of the wood of the coffin and the folds of the blanket, are language—language clear and expressive in the highest degree. But the close pressure of the dog's breast against the wood, the convulsive clinging of the paws, which has dragged the blanket off the trestle, the total powerlessness of the head laid, close and motionless, upon its folds, the fixed and tearful fall of the eye in its utter hopelessness, the rigidity of repose which marks that there has been no motion nor change in the trance of agony since the last blow was struck on the coffin-lid, the quietness and gloom of the chamber, the spec-

tacles marking the place where the Bible was last closed, indicating how lonely has been the life—how unwatched the departure of him who is now laid solitary in his sleep;—these are all thoughts—thoughts by which the picture is separated at once from hundreds of equal merit, as far as mere painting goes, by which it ranks as a work of the highest art, and stamps its author, not as the neat imitator of the texture of a skin, or the fold of a drapery, but as the Man of Mind.

It is not, however, always easy, either in painting or literature, to determine where the influence of language stops, and where that of thought begins. Many thoughts are so dependent upon the language in which they are clothed, that they would lose half their beauty if otherwise expressed. But the highest thoughts are those which are least dependent on language, and the dignity of any composition and praise to which it is entitled are in exact proportion to its independency of language or expression. A composition is indeed usually most perfect, when to such intrinsic dignity is added all that expression can do to attract and adorn; but in every case of supreme excellence this all becomes as nothing. We are more gratified by the simplest lines or words which can suggest the idea in its own naked beauty, than by the robe or the gem which conceal while they decorate; we are better pleased to feel by their absence how little they could bestow, than by their presence how much they can destroy.

There is therefore a distinction to be made between what is ornamental in language and what is expressive. That part of it which is necessary to the embodying and conveying the thought is worthy of respect and attention as necessary to excellence, though not the test of it. But that part of it which is decorative has little more to do with the intrinsic excellence of the picture than the frame or the varnishing of it. And

§ 5. Difficulty of fixing an exact limit between language and thought.

§ 6. Distinction between decorative and expressive language.

this caution in distinguishing between the ornamental and the expressive is peculiarly necessary in painting; for in the language of words it is nearly impossible for that which is not expressive to be beautiful, except by mere rhythm or melody, any sacrifice to which is immediately stigmatised as error. But the beauty of mere language in painting is not only very attractive and entertaining to the spectator, but requires for its attainment no small exertion of mind and devotion of time by the artist. Hence, in art, men have frequently fancied that they were becoming rhetoricians and poets when they were only learning to speak melodiously, and the judge has over and over again advanced to the honour of authors those who were never more than ornamental writing-masters.

§ 7. Instance
in the Dutch
and early
Italian schools.

Most pictures of the Dutch school, for instance, excepting always those of Rubens, Vandyke, and Rembrandt, are ostentatious exhibitions of the artist's power of speech, the clear and vigorous elocution of useless and senseless words: while the early efforts of Cimabue and Giotto are the burning messages of prophecy, delivered by the stammering lips of infants. It is not by ranking the former as more than mechanics, or the latter as less than artists, that the taste of the multitude, always awake to the lowest pleasures which art can bestow, and blunt to the highest, is to be formed or elevated. It must be the part of the judicious critic carefully to distinguish what is language, and what is thought, and to rank and praise pictures chiefly for the latter, considering the former as a totally inferior excellence, and one which cannot be compared with nor weighed against thought in any way nor in any degree whatsoever. The picture which has the nobler and more numerous ideas, however awkwardly expressed, is a greater and a better picture than that which has the less noble and less numerous ideas, however beautifully expressed. No weight, nor mass nor beauty of execu-

tion can outweigh one grain or fragment of thought. Three penstrokes of Raffaele are a greater and a better picture than the most finished work that ever Carlo Dolci polished into inanity. A pencil scratch of Wilkie's on the back of a letter is a greater and a better picture,—and I use the term picture in its full sense,—than the most laboured and luminous canvass that ever left the easel of Gerard Dow. A finished work of a great artist is only better than its sketch, if the sources of pleasure belonging to colour and chiaroscuro—valuable in themselves, are so employed as to increase the impressiveness of the thought. But if one atom of thought has vanished, all colour, all finish, all execution, all ornament, are too dearly bought. Nothing but thought can pay for thought, and the instant that the increasing refinement or finish of the picture begins to be paid for by the loss of the faintest shadow of an idea, that instant all refinement or finish is an excrescence, and a deformity.

Yet although in all our speculations on art, language is thus to be distinguished from, and held subordinate to, that which it conveys, we must still remember that there are certain ideas inherent in language itself, and that strictly speaking, every pleasure connected with art has in it some reference to the intellect. The mere sensual pleasure of the eye, received from the most brilliant piece of colouring, is as nothing to that which it receives from a crystal prism, except as it depends on our perception of a certain meaning and intended arrangement of colour, which has been the subject of intellect. Nay, the term idea, according to Locke's definition of it, will extend even to the sensual impressions themselves as far as they are "things which the mind occupies itself about in thinking," that is, not as they are felt by the eye only, but as they are received by the mind through the eye. So that, if I say that the greatest picture is that which conveys to the mind

§ 8. Yet there are certain ideas belonging to language itself.

§ 9. The definition.

of the spectator the greatest number of the greatest ideas, I have a definition which will include as subjects of comparison every pleasure which art is capable of conveying. If I were to say, on the contrary, that the best picture was that which most closely imitated nature, I should assume that art could only please by imitating nature, and I should cast out of the pale of criticism those parts of works of art which are not imitative, that is to say, intrinsic beauties of colour and form, and those works of art wholly, which like the Arabesques of Raphael in the Loggias, are not imitative at all. Now I want a definition of art wide enough to include all its varieties of aim : I do not say therefore that the art is greatest which gives most pleasure, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to teach, and not to please. I do not say that the art is greatest which teaches us most, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to please and not to teach. I do not say that the art is greatest which imitates best, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to create, and not to imitate. But I say that the art is greatest, which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas, and I call an idea great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and in occupying, exercises and exalts, the faculty by which it is received.

If this then be the definition of great art, that of a great artist naturally follows. He is the greatest artist who has embodied, in the sum of his works, the greatest number of the greatest ideas.

CHAPTER III.

OF IDEAS OF POWER.

THE definition of art which I have just given, requires me to determine what kinds of ideas can be received from works of art, and which of these are the greatest, before proceeding to any practical application of the test.

§ 1. What classes of ideas are conveyable by art.

I think that all the sources of pleasure, or any other good, to be derived from works of art, may be referred to five distinct heads.

- I. Ideas of Power.—The perception or conception of the mental or bodily powers by which the work has been produced.
- II. Ideas of Imitation.—The perception that the thing produced resembles something else.
- III. Ideas of Truth.—The perception of faithfulness in a statement of facts by the thing produced.
- IV. Ideas of Beauty.—The perception of beauty, either in the thing produced, or in what it suggests or resembles.
- V. Ideas of Relation.—The perception of intellectual relations, in the thing produced, or in what it suggests or resembles.

I shall briefly distinguish the nature and effects of each of these classes of ideas.

- I. Ideas of Power.—These are the simple perception of the mental or bodily powers exerted in the production of any work of art. According to the

§ 2. Ideas of power vary much in relative dignity.

dignity and degree of the power perceived is the dignity of the idea; but the whole class of ideas is received by the intellect, and they excite the best of the moral feelings, veneration, and the desire of exertion. As a species, therefore, they are one of the noblest connected with art; but the differences in degree of dignity among themselves are infinite, being correspondent with every order of power,—from that of the fingers to that of the most exalted intellect. Thus, when we see an Indian's paddle carved from the handle to the blade, we have a conception of prolonged manual labour, and are gratified in proportion to the supposed expenditure of time and exertion. These are, indeed, powers of a low order, yet the pleasure arising from the conception of them enters very largely indeed into our admiration of all elaborate ornament, architectural decoration, &c. The delight with which we look on the fretted front of Rouen Cathedral depends in no small degree on the simple perception of time employed and labour expended in its production. But it is a right, that is, an ennobling pleasure, even in this its lowest phase; and even the pleasure felt by those persons who praise a drawing for its "finish," or its "work," which is one precisely of the same kind, would be right, if it did not imply a want of perception of the higher powers which render work unnecessary. If to the evidence of labour be added that of strength or dexterity, the sensation of power is yet increased; if to strength and dexterity be added that of ingenuity and judgment, it is multiplied tenfold, and so on, through all the subjects of action of body or mind, we receive the more exalted pleasure from the more exalted power.

§ 3. But are received from whatever has been the subject of power.

So far the nature and effects of ideas of power cannot but be admitted by all. But the circumstance which I wish especially to insist upon, with respect to them, is one which may not, perhaps, be so readily allowed, namely,

that they are independent of the nature or worthiness of the object from which they are received, and that whatever has been the subject of a great power, whether there be intrinsic and apparent worthiness in itself or not, bears with it the evidence of having been so, and is capable of giving the ideas of power, and the consequent pleasures, in their full degree. For observe, that a thing is not properly said to have been the result of a great power, on which only some part of that power has been expended. A nut may be cracked by a steam-engine, but it has not, in being so, been the subject of the power of the engine. And thus it is falsely said of great men, that they waste their lofty powers on unworthy objects: the object may be dangerous or useless, but, as far as the phrase has reference to difficulty of performance, it cannot be unworthy of the power which it brings into exertion, because nothing can become a subject of action to a greater power which can be accomplished by a less, any more than bodily strength can be exerted where there is nothing to resist it.

So then, men may let their great powers lie dormant, while they employ their mean and petty powers on mean and petty objects; but it is physically impossible to employ a great power, except on a great object. Consequently, wherever power of any kind or degree has been exerted, the marks and evidence of it are stamped upon its results: it is impossible that it should be lost or wasted, or without record, even in the "estimation of a hair:" and therefore, whatever has been the subject of a great power, bears about with it the image of that which created it, and is what is commonly called "excellent." And this is the true meaning of the word excellent, as distinguished from the terms, "beautiful," "useful," "good," &c.; and we shall always, in future, use the word excellent, as signifying that the thing to

The meaning
of the word
"excellence."

which it is applied required a great power for its production.*

§ 4. What is necessary to the distinguishing of excellence.

The faculty of perceiving what powers are required for the production of a thing, is the faculty of perceiving excellence. It is this faculty in which men, even of the most cultivated taste, must always be wanting, unless they have added practice to reflection; because none can estimate the power manifested in victory, unless they have personally measured the strength to be overcome. Though, therefore, it is possible, by the cultivation of sensibility and judgment, to become capable of distinguishing what is beautiful, it is totally impossible, without practice and knowledge, to distinguish or feel what is excellent. The beauty or the truth of Titian's flesh-tint may be appreciated by all; but it is only to the artist, whose multiplied hours of toil have not reached the slightest resemblance of one of its tones, that its *excellence* is manifest.

§ 5. The pleasure attendant on conquering difficulties is right.

Wherever, then, difficulty has been overcome, there is excellence: and therefore, in order to prove a work excellent, we have only to prove the difficulty of its production: whether it be useful or beautiful is another question; its excellence depends on its difficulty alone. Nor is it a false or diseased taste which looks for the overcoming of difficulties, and has pleasure in it, even without any view to resultant good. It has been made

* Of course the word "excellent" is primarily a mere synonym with "surpassing," and when applied to persons, has the general meaning given by Johnson—"the state of abounding in any good quality." But when applied to things, it has always reference to the power by which they are produced. We talk of excellent music or poetry, because it is difficult to compose or write such, but never of excellent flowers, because all flowers being the result of the same power, must be equally excellent. We distinguish them only as beautiful or useful, and therefore, as there is no other one word to signify that quality of a thing produced by which it pleases us merely as the result of power, and as the term "excellent" is more frequently used in this sense than in any other, I choose to limit it at once to this sense, and I wish it, when I use it in future, to be so understood.

part of our moral nature that we should have a pleasure in encountering and conquering opposition, for the sake of the struggle and the victory, not for the sake of any after result ; and not only our own victory, but the perception of that of another, is in all cases the source of pure and ennobling pleasure. And if we often hear it said, and truly said, that an artist has erred by seeking rather to show his skill in overcoming technical difficulties, than to reach a great end, be it observed that he is only blamed because he has sought to conquer an inferior difficulty rather than a great one ; for it is much easier to overcome technical difficulties than to reach a great end. Whenever the visible victory over difficulties is found painful or in false taste, it is owing to the preference of an inferior to a great difficulty, or to the false estimate of what is difficult and what is not. It is far more difficult to be simple than to be complicated ; far more difficult to sacrifice skill and cease exertion in the proper place, than to expend both indiscriminately. We shall find, in the course of our investigation, that beauty and difficulty go together ; and that they are only mean and paltry difficulties which it is wrong or contemptible to wrestle with. Be it remembered then—Power is never wasted. Whatever power has been employed, produces excellence in proportion to its own dignity and exertion ; and the faculty of perceiving this exertion, and appreciating this dignity, is the faculty of perceiving excellence.

CHAPTER IV.

OF IDEAS OF IMITATION.

§ 1. False use
of the term
"imitation" by
many writers
on art

FUSELI, in his lectures, and many other persons of equally just and accurate habits of thought, (among others, S. T. Coleridge,) make a distinction between imitation and copying, representing the first as the legitimate function of art—the latter as its corruption; but as such a distinction is by no means warranted, or explained by the common meaning of the words themselves, it is not easy to comprehend exactly in what sense they are used by those writers. And though, reasoning from the context, I can understand what ideas those words stand for in their minds, I cannot allow the terms to be properly used as symbols of those ideas, which (especially in the case of the word *Imitation*) are exceedingly complex, and totally different from what most people would understand by the term. And by men of less accurate thought, the word is used still more vaguely or falsely. For instance, Burke (*Treatise on the Sublime*, part i. sect. 16.) says, "When the object represented in poetry or painting is such as we could have no desire of seeing in the reality, then we may be sure that its power in poetry or painting is owing to the power of *imitation*." We may be sure of the contrary: for if the object be undesirable in itself, the closer the imitation the less will be the pleasure. The real pleasure may be in what we have been just speaking of,

the dexterity of the artist's hand; or it may be in a beautiful or singular arrangement of colours, or a thoughtful chiaroscuro, or in the pure beauty of certain forms which art forces on our notice, though we should not have observed them in the reality; and I conceive that none of these sources of pleasure are in any way expressed or intimated by the term "imitation."

But there is one source of pleasure in works of art totally different from all these, which I conceive to be properly and accurately expressed by the word "imitation:" one which, though constantly confused in reasoning, because it is always associated in fact, with other means of pleasure, is totally separated from them in its nature, and is the real basis of whatever complicated or various meaning may be afterwards attached to the word in the minds of men.

I wish to point out this distinct source of pleasure clearly at once, and only to use the word "imitation" in reference to it.

Whenever anything looks like what it is not, the resemblance being so great as *nearly* to deceive, we feel a kind of pleasurable surprise, an agreeable excitement of mind, exactly the same in its nature as that which we receive from juggling. Whenever we perceive this in something produced by art, that is to say, whenever the work is seen to resemble something which we know it is not, we receive what I call an idea of imitation. *Why* such ideas are pleasing, it would be out of our present purpose to enquire; we only know that there is no man who does not feel pleasure in his animal nature from gentle surprise, and that such surprise can be excited in no more distinct manner than by the evidence that a thing is not what it appears to be. Now two things are requisite to our complete and most pleasurable perception of this: first, that the resemblance be so perfect as to amount to a deception; secondly, that there be some means of

§2. Real meaning of the term

§3. What is requisite to the sense of imitation.

proving at the same moment that it *is* a deception. The most perfect ideas and pleasures of imitation are, therefore, when one sense is contradicted by another, both bearing as positive evidence on the subject as each is capable of alone; as when the eye says a thing is round, and the finger says it is flat; they are, therefore, never felt in so high a degree as in painting, where appearance of projection, roughness, hair, velvet, &c. are given with a smooth surface, or in wax-work, where the first evidence of the senses is perpetually contradicted by their experience; but the moment we come to marble, our definition checks us, for a marble figure does not look like what it is not: it looks like marble, and like the form of a man, but then it *is* marble, and it *is* the form of a man. It does not look like a man, which it is not, but like the form of a man, which it is. Form is form, *bonâ fide* and actual, whether in marble or in flesh—not an imitation or resemblance of form, but real form. The chalk outline of the bough of a tree on paper, is not an imitation, it looks like chalk and paper—not like wood, and that which it suggests to the mind is not properly said to be *like* the form of a bough, it *is* the form of a bough. Now, then, we see the limits of an idea of imitation; it extends only to the sensation of trickery and deception occasioned by a thing being intentionally different from what it seems to be; and the degree of the pleasure depends on the degree of difference and the perfection of the resemblance, not on the nature of the thing resembled. The simple pleasure in the imitation is precisely of the same degree (if the accuracy be equal), whether the subject be a Madonna or a lemon-peel. There are other collateral sources of pleasure which are necessarily associated with this, but that part of the pleasure which depends on the imitation is the same in both.

§ 4. The pleasure resulting

Ideas of imitation, then, act by producing the simple

pleasure of surprise, and that not of surprise in its higher sense and function, but of the mean and paltry surprise which is felt in jugglery. These ideas and pleasures are the most contemptible which can be received from art; first, because it is necessary to their enjoyment that the mind should reject the impression and address of the thing represented, and fix itself only upon the reflection that it is not what it seems to be. All high or noble emotion or thought are thus rendered physically impossible, while the mind exults in what is very like a strictly sensual pleasure, and one precisely of the same order and degree, whether it be received from the bristles of a boar or the tears of a Magdalen. We may consider tears as a result of agony or of art, whichever we please, but not of both at the same moment. If we are surprised by them as an attainment of the one, it is impossible we can be moved by them as a sign of the other.

Ideas of imitation are contemptible in the second place, because not only do they preclude the spectator from enjoying inherent beauty in the subject, but they can only be received from mean and paltry subjects, because it is impossible to imitate anything really great. We can "paint a cat or a fiddle, so that they look as if we could take them up;" but we cannot imitate the ocean, or the Alps. We can imitate fruit, but not a tree; flowers, but not a pasture; cut-glass, but not the rainbow. All pictures in which deceptive powers of imitation are displayed are therefore either of contemptible subjects, or have the imitation shown in contemptible parts of them, bits of dress, jewels, furniture, &c.

Thirdly, these ideas are contemptible, because no ideas of power are associated with them; to the ignorant, imitation, indeed, seems difficult, and its success praiseworthy, but even they can by no possibility see more in the artist than they do in a juggler, who

from imitation
the most con-
temptible that
can be derived
from art.

§ 5. Imitation
is only of con-
temptible sub-
jects.

§ 6. Imitation
is contemptible
because it is
easy.

arrives at a strange end by means with which they are unacquainted. To the instructed, the juggler is by far the more respectable artist of the two, for they know sleight of hand to be an art of immensely more difficult acquirement, and to imply more ingenuity in the artist than a power of deceptive imitation in painting, which requires nothing more for its attainment than a true eye, a steady hand, and some industry—qualities which in no degree separate the imitative artist from a watch-maker, pin-maker, or any other neat-handed artificer. These remarks do not apply to the art of the Diorama, or the stage, where the pleasure is not dependent on the imitation, but is the same which we should receive from nature herself, only far inferior in degree. It is a noble pleasure; but we shall see in the course of our investigation, both that it is inferior to that which we receive when there is no deception at all, and why it is so.

§ 7. Recapitulation.

Whenever then in future, I speak of ideas of imitation, I wish to be understood to mean the immediate and present perception that something produced by art is not what it seems to be. I prefer saying “that it is not what it seems to be,” to saying, “that it seems to be what it is not,” because we perceive at once what it seems to be, and the idea of imitation, and the consequent pleasure, result from the subsequent perception of its being something else—flat, for instance, when we thought it was round.

CHAPTER V.

OF IDEAS OF TRUTH.

THE word truth, as applied to art, signifies the faithful statement, either to the mind or senses, of any fact of nature. § 1. Meaning of the word "truth" as applied to art.

We receive an idea of truth, then, when we perceive the faithfulness of such a statement.

The difference between ideas of truth and of imitation lies chiefly in the following points.

First,—Imitation can only be of something material, but truth has reference to statements both of the qualities of material things, and of emotions, impressions, and thoughts. There is a moral as well as material truth,—a truth of impression as well as of form,—of thought as well as of matter; and the truth of impression and thought is a thousand times the more important of the two. Hence, truth is a term of universal application, but imitation is limited to that narrow field of art which takes cognizance only of material things. § 2. First difference between truth and imitation.

Secondly,—Truth may be stated by any signs or symbols which have a definite signification in the minds of those to whom they are addressed, although such signs be themselves no image nor likeness of anything. Whatever can excite in the mind the conception of certain facts, can give ideas of truth, though it be in no degree the imitation or resemblance of those facts, If § 3. Second difference.

there be—we do not say there is,—but if there be in painting anything which operates, as words do, not by resembling anything, but by being taken as a symbol and substitute for it, and thus inducing the effect of it, then this channel of communication can convey uncorrupted truth, though it do not in any degree resemble the facts whose conception it induces. But ideas of imitation, of course, require the likeness of the object. They speak to the senses only: truth to the mind.

§ 4. Third difference.

Thirdly, and in consequence of what is above stated, an idea of truth exists in the statement of *one* attribute of anything, but an idea of imitation only in the resemblance of as many attributes as we are usually cognizant of in its real presence. A pencil outline of the bough of a tree on white paper is a statement of a certain number of facts of form. It does not yet amount to the imitation of anything. The idea of that form is not given in nature by lines at all, still less by black lines with a white space between them. But those lines convey to the mind a distinct impression of a certain number of facts, which it recognizes as agreeable with its previous impressions of the bough of a tree; and it receives, therefore, an idea of truth. If, instead of two lines, we give a dark form with the brush, we convey information of a certain relation of shade between the bough and sky, recognizable for another idea of truth; but we have still no imitation, for the white paper is not the least like air, nor the black shadow like wood. It is not until after a certain number of ideas of truth have been collected together, that we arrive at an idea of imitation.

§ 5. No accurate truths necessary to imitation.

Hence it might at first sight appear, that an idea of imitation, inasmuch as several ideas of truth were united in it, was nobler than a simple idea of truth. And if it were necessary that the ideas of truth should be perfect, or should be subjects of contemplation *as such*, it would be so. But, observe, we require to produce the effect

of imitation only so many and such ideas of truth as the *senses* are usually cognizant of. Now the senses are not usually, nor unless they be especially devoted to the service, cognizant, with accuracy, of any truths but those of space and projection. It requires long study and attention before they give certain evidence of even the simplest truths of form. For instance, the quay on which the figure is sitting, with his hand at his eyes, in Claude's seaport, No. 14, in the National Gallery, is egregiously out of perspective. The eye of this artist, with all his study, had thus not acquired the power of taking cognizance of the form even of a simple parallel-piped. How much less of the complicated forms of boughs, leaves, or limbs? Although, therefore, something resembling the real form is necessary to deception, this something is not to be called a *truth* of form; for, strictly speaking, there are no degrees of truth, there are only degrees of approach to it; and an approach to it, whose feebleness and imperfection would instantly offend and give pain to a mind really capable of distinguishing truth, is yet quite sufficient for all the purposes of deceptive imitation. It is the same with regard to colour. If we were to paint a tree sky-blue, or a dog rose-pink, the discernment of the public would be keen enough to discover the falsehood; but, so that there be just so much approach to truth of colour as may come up to the common idea of it in men's minds, that is to say, if the trees be all bright green, and flesh unbroken buff, and ground unbroken brown, though all the real and refined truths of colour be wholly omitted, or rather defied and contradicted, there is yet quite enough for all purposes of imitation. The only facts then, which we are usually and certainly cognizant of, are those of distance and projection, and if these be tolerably given, with something like truth of form and colour to assist them, the idea of imitation is complete. I would undertake to paint an arm, with every muscle

out of its place, and every bone of false form and dislocated articulation, and yet to observe certain coarse and broad resemblances of true outline, which, with careful shading, would induce deception, and draw down the praise and delight of the discerning public. The other day, at Bruges, while I was endeavouring to set down in my note-book something of the ineffable expression of the Madonna in the cathedral, a French amateur came up to me, to inquire if I had seen the modern French pictures in a neighbouring church. I had not, but felt little inclined to leave my marble for all the canvass that ever suffered from French brushes. My apathy was attacked with gradually increasing energy of praise. There never had been such pictures painted since the time of Apelles; Rubens never executed—Titian never coloured anything like them. I thought this highly probable, and still sat quiet. The voice continued at my ear. “Parbleu, Monsieur, Michel Ange n’a rien produit de plus beau!” “De plus beau?” repeated I, wishing to know what particular excellences of Michael Angelo were to be intimated by this expression. “Monsieur, on ne peut plus—c’est un tableau admirable—inconcevable; Monsieur,” said the Frenchman, lifting up his hands to heaven, as he concentrated in one conclusive and overwhelming proposition the qualities which were to outshine Rubens and overpower Buonaroti,—“Monsieur, IL SORT!”

Had I wished to know if the anatomy of the limbs was faithfully marked—if their colour was truly expressive of light, and beautiful in itself—if the composition of the picture was perfect, or its conception great—I might as well have inquired of one of the Flanders mares in the stable at the Fleur de Blé, as of this gentleman. He could only perceive two truths—flesh colour and projection. These constituted his notion of the perfection of painting; because they unite

all that is necessary for deception. He was not therefore cognizant of many ideas of truth, though perfectly cognizant of ideas of imitation.

We shall see, in the course of our investigation of ideas of truth, that ideas of imitation not only do not imply their presence, but even are inconsistent with it; and that pictures which imitate so as to deceive, are never true. But this is not the place for the proof of this; at present we have only to insist on the last and greatest distinction between ideas of truth and of imitation—that the mind, in receiving one of the former, dwells upon its own conception of the fact, or form, or feeling stated, and is occupied only with the qualities and character of that fact or form, considering it as real and existing, being all the while totally regardless of the signs or symbols by which the notion of it has been conveyed. These signs have no pretence, nor hypocrisy, nor legerdemain about them;—there is nothing to be found out, or sifted, or surprised in them;—they bear their message simply and clearly, and it is that message which the mind takes from them and dwells upon, regardless of the language in which it is delivered. But the mind, in receiving an idea of imitation, is wholly occupied in finding out that what has been suggested to it is not what it appears to be: it does not dwell on the suggestion, but on the perception that it is a false suggestion: it derives its pleasure, not from the contemplation of a truth, but from the discovery of a falsehood. So that the moment ideas of truth are grouped together, so as to give rise to an idea of imitation, they change their very nature—lose their essence as ideas of truth—and are corrupted and degraded, so as to share in the treachery of what they have produced. Hence, finally, ideas of truth are the foundation, and ideas of imitation, the destruction, of all art. We shall be better able to appreciate their relative dignity after the investigation which we propose of the functions of the former;

§ 6. Ideas of truth are inconsistent with ideas of imitation.

but we may as well now express the conclusion to which we shall then be led—that no picture can be good which deceives by its imitation, for the very reason that nothing can be beautiful which is not true.

CHAPTER VI.

OF IDEAS OF BEAUTY.

ANY material object which can give us pleasure in the simple contemplation of its qualities without any direct and definite exertion of the intellect, I call in some way, or in some degree, beautiful. Why we receive pleasure from some forms and colours, and not from others, is no more to be asked or answered than why we like sugar and dislike wormwood. The utmost subtlety of investigation will only lead us to ultimate instincts and principles of human nature, for which no further reason can be given than the simple will of the Deity that we should be so created. We may, indeed, perceive, as far as we are acquainted with His nature, that we have been so constructed as, when in a healthy and cultivated state of mind, to derive pleasure from whatever things are illustrative of that nature; but we do not receive pleasure from them *because* they are illustrative of it, nor from any perception that they are illustrative of it, but instinctively and necessarily, as we derive sensual pleasure from the scent of a rose. On these primary principles of our nature, education and accident operate to an unlimited extent, they may be cultivated or checked, directed or diverted, gifted by right guidance with the most acute and faultless sense, or subjected by neglect to every phase of error and disease. He who has followed up these natural laws of aversion and desire, rendering them

§ 1. Definition
of the term
"beautiful."

more and more authoritative by constant obedience, so as to derive pleasure always from that which God originally intended should give him pleasure, and who derives the greatest possible sum of pleasure from any given object, is a man of taste.

§ 2. Definition
of the term
"taste."

This, then, is the real meaning of this much disputed word. Perfect taste is the faculty of receiving the greatest possible pleasure from those material sources which are attractive to our moral nature in its purity and perfection. He who receives little pleasure from these sources, wants taste; he who receives pleasure from any other sources, has false or bad taste.

§ 3 Distinction
between taste
and judgment.

And it is thus that the term taste is to be distinguished from that of "judgment," with which it is constantly confounded. Judgment is a general term, expressing definite action of the intellect, and applicable to every kind of subject which can be submitted to it. There may be judgment of congruity, judgment of truth, judgment of justice, and judgment of difficulty and excellence. But all these exertions of the intellect are totally distinct from taste, properly so called, which is the instinctive and instant preferring of one material object to another without any obvious reason, except that it is proper to human nature in its perfection so to do.

§ 4. How far
beauty may
become intel-
lectual.

Observe, however, I do not mean by excluding direct exertion of the intellect from ideas of beauty, to assert that beauty has no effect upon, nor connection with the intellect. All our moral feelings are so inwoven with our intellectual powers, that we cannot affect the one without in some degree addressing the other; and in all high ideas of beauty, it is more than probable that much of the pleasure depends on delicate and untraceable perceptions of fitness, propriety, and relation, which are purely intellectual, and through which we arrive at our noblest ideas of what is commonly and rightly called "intellectual beauty." But there is yet

no immediate *exertion* of the intellect, that is to say, if a person receiving even the noblest ideas of simple beauty be asked *why* he likes the object exciting them, he will not be able to give any distinct reason, nor to trace in his mind any formed thought, to which he can appeal as a source of pleasure. He will say that the thing gratifies, fills, hallows, exalts his mind, but he will not be able to say why, or how. If he can, and if he can show that he perceives in the object any expression of distinct thought, he has received more than an idea of beauty—it is an idea of relation.

Ideas of beauty are among the noblest which can be presented to the human mind, invariably exalting and purifying it according to their degree, and it would appear that we are intended by the Deity to be constantly under their influence, because there is not one single object in nature which is not capable of conveying them, and which to the rightly perceiving mind, does not present an incalculably greater number of beautiful than of deformed parts, there being in fact, scarcely any thing in pure, undiseased nature like positive deformity, but only degrees of beauty, or such slight and rare points of permitted contrast as may render all around them more valuable by their opposition, spots of blackness in creation, to make its colours felt.

§ 5. The high rank and function of ideas of beauty.

But although everything in nature is more or less beautiful, every species of object has its own kind and degree of beauty, some being in their own nature more beautiful than others, and few, if any, individuals possessing the utmost degree of beauty of which the species is capable. This utmost degree of specific beauty, necessarily coexistent with the utmost perfection of the object in other respects, is the ideal of the object.

§ 6. Meaning of the term "ideal beauty."

Ideas of beauty then, be it remembered, are the subjects of moral, but not of intellectual perception. By the investigation of them we shall be led to the knowledge of the ideal subjects of art.

CHAPTER VII.

OF IDEAS OF RELATION.

I USE this term rather as one of convenience than as § 1. General meaning of the term. adequately expressive of the vast class of ideas which I wish to be comprehended under it, namely, all those conveyable by art, which are the subjects of distinct intellectual perception and action, and which are therefore worthy of the name of thoughts. But as every thought, or definite exertion of intellect, implies two subjects, and some connection or relation inferred between them, the term "ideas of relation" is not incorrect, though it is inexpressive.

Under this head must be arranged everything pro- § 2. What ideas are to be comprehended under it. ductive of expression, sentiment, and character, whether in figures or landscapes, (for there may be as much definite expression and marked carrying out of particular thoughts in the treatment of inanimate as of animate nature,) everything relating to the conception of the subject and to the congruity and relation of its parts; not as they enhance each other's beauty by known and constant laws of composition, but as they give each other expression and meaning, by particular application, requiring distinct thought to discover or to enjoy; the choice, for instance, of a particular lurid or appalling light, to illustrate an incident in itself terrible, or of a particular tone of pure colour to prepare the mind for the expression of refined and delicate feeling, and, in a still higher sense, the invention of such incidents and

thoughts as can be expressed in words as well as on canvass, and are totally independent of any means of art but such as may serve for the bare suggestion of them. The principal object in the foreground of Turner's "Building of Carthage" is a group of children sailing toy boats. The exquisite choice of this incident, as expressive of the ruling passion, which was to be the source of future greatness, in preference to the tumult of busy stonemasons or arming soldiers, is quite as appreciable when it is told as when it is seen,—it has nothing to do with the technicalities of painting, a scratch of the pen would have conveyed the idea and spoken to the intellect as much as the elaborate realizations of colour. Such a thought as this is something far above all art, it is epic poetry of the highest order. Claude, in subjects of the same kind, commonly introduces people carrying red trunks with iron locks about, and dwells, with infantine delight, on the lustre of the leather and the ornaments of the iron. The intellect can have no occupation here, we must look to the imitation or to nothing. Consequently, Turner rises above Claude in the very first instant of the conception of his picture, and acquires an intellectual superiority which no powers of the draughtsman or the artist (supposing that such existed in his antagonist) could ever wrest from him.

§ 3. The exceeding nobility of these ideas.

Such is the function and force of ideas of relation. They are what I have asserted in the second chapter of this section to be the noblest subjects of art. Dependent upon it only for expression, they cause all the rest of its complicated sources of pleasure to take in comparison with them, the place of mere language or decoration; nay even the noblest ideas of beauty sink at once beside these into subordination and subjection. It would add little to the influence of Landseer's picture above instanced, Chap. II. § 4, that the form of the dog should be conceived with every perfection of curve

and colour which its nature was capable of, and that the ideal lines should be carried out with the science of a Praxiteles, nay, the instant that the beauty so obtained interfered with the impression of agony and desolation, and drew the mind away from the feeling of the animal to its outward form, that instant would the picture become monstrous and degraded. The utmost glory of the human body is a mean subject of contemplation, compared to the emotion, exertion and character of that which animates it; the lustre of the limbs of the Aphrodite is faint beside that of the brow of the Madonna, and the divine form of the Greek god, except as it is the incarnation and expression of divine mind, is degraded beside the passion and the prophecy of the vaults of the Sistine.

Ideas of relation are of course, with respect to art § 4. Why no subdivision of so extensive a class is necessary.

generally, the most extensive as the most important source of pleasure, and if we proposed entering upon the criticism of historical works, it would be absurd to attempt to do so without further subdivision and arrangement. But the old landscape painters got over so much canvass without either exercise of, or appeal to, the intellect, that we shall be little troubled with the subject as far as they are concerned, and whatever subdivision we may adopt, as it will therefore have particular reference to the works of modern artists, will be better understood when we have obtained some knowledge of them in less important points.

By the term "ideas of relation," then, I mean in future to express all those sources of pleasure, which involve and require at the instant of their perception, active exertion of the intellectual powers.

SECTION II.

OF POWER.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES RESPECTING IDEAS OF POWER.

§ 1. No necessity for detailed study of ideas of imitation.

WE have seen in the last section, what classes of ideas may be conveyed by art, and we have been able so far to appreciate their relative worth as to see, that from the list, as it is to be applied to the purposes of legitimate criticism, we may at once throw out the ideas of imitation; first, because, as we have shown, they are unworthy the pursuit of the artist; and secondly, because they are nothing more than the result of a particular association of ideas of truth. In examining the truth of art, therefore, we shall be compelled to take notice of those particular truths, whose association gives rise to the ideas of imitation. We shall then see more clearly the meanness of those truths, and we shall find ourselves able to use them as tests of vice in art, saying of a picture,—“It deceives, therefore it must be bad.”

§ 2. Nor for separate study of ideas of power.

Ideas of power, in the same way, cannot be completely viewed as a separate class, not because they are mean or unimportant, but because they are almost always associated with, or dependent upon, some of the higher ideas of truth, beauty, or relation, rendered with decision or velocity. That power which delights us in the chalk sketch of a great painter is not one of the

fingers, not like that of the writing-master, mere dexterity of hand. It is the accuracy and certainty of the knowledge, rendered evident by its rapid and fearless expression, which is the real source of pleasure; and so upon each difficulty of art, whether it be to know, or to relate or to invent, the sensation of power is attendant, when we see that difficulty totally and swiftly vanquished. Hence, as we determine what is otherwise desirable in art, we shall gradually develope the sources of ideas of power, and if there be anything difficult which is not otherwise desirable, it must be afterwards considered separately.

But it will be necessary at present to notice a particular form of the ideas of power, which is partially independent of knowledge of truth, or difficulty, and which is apt to corrupt the judgment of the critic, and debase the work of the artist. It is evident that the conception of power which we receive from a calculation of unseen difficulty, and an estimate of unseen strength, can never be so impressive as that which we receive from the present sensation or sight of the one resisting, and the other overwhelming. In the one case the power is imagined, and in the other felt. Supposing ourselves even capable of ascertaining in our own persons, the truth of what is often by sculptors affirmed of the Laocoon, that the knowledge developed in it must have taken a life-time to accumulate, we should yet scarcely receive from that statue the same sensation of power with which we are at once impressed by him who hurled the mighty prostration of the limbs of the Jonah along the arch of the Sistine. There are thus two modes in which we receive the conception of power; one, the most just, when by a perfect knowledge of the difficulty to be overcome, and the means employed, we form a right estimate of the faculties exerted; the other, when without possessing such intimate and accurate know-

§ 3. Except under one particular form.

§ 4. There are two modes of receiving ideas of power, commonly inconsistent.

ledge, we are impressed by a sensation of power in visible action. If these two modes of receiving the impression agree in the result, and if the sensation be equal to the estimate, we receive the utmost possible idea of power. But this is the case perhaps with the works of only one man out of the whole circle of the fathers of art, of him to whom we have just referred, Michael Angelo. In others the estimate and the sensation are constantly unequal, and often contradictory.

§ 5. First reason of the inconsistency.

The first reason of this inconsistency is, that in order to receive a *sensation* of power, we must see it in operation. Its victory, therefore, must not be achieved, but achieving, and therefore imperfect. Thus we receive a greater sensation of power from the half-hewn limbs of the *Notte e Giorno*, of the *Cappella Medici*, than even from the divine inebriety of the *Bacchus* in the gallery—greater from the life dashed out along the Friezes of the *Parthenon*, than from the polished limbs of the *Apollo*,—greater from the ink sketch of the head of *Raffaello's St. Catherine*, than from the perfection of its realization.

§ 6. Second reason for the inconsistency.

Another reason of the inconsistency is, that the sensation of power is in proportion to the apparent inadequacy of the means to the end, so that the impression is much greater from a partial success attained with slight effort, than from perfect success attained with greater proportional effort. Now, in all art, every touch or effort does individually less in proportion as the work approaches perfection. The first five chalk touches bring a head into existence out of nothing. No five touches in the whole course of the work will ever do so much as these, and the difference made by each touch is more and more imperceptible as the work approaches completion. Consequently, the ratio between the means employed and the effect produced is constantly decreasing, and therefore the least sensation of power is received from the most perfect work.

It is thus evident that there are sensations of power about imperfect art, so that it be right art as far as it goes, which must always be wanting in its perfection, and that there are sources of pleasure in the hasty sketch and the rough hewn block, which are partially wanting in the tinted canvass and the polished marble. But it is nevertheless wrong to prefer the sensation of power to the intellectual perception of it. There is in reality greater power in the completion than in the commencement, and though it be not so manifest to the senses, it ought to have higher influence on the mind, and therefore in praising pictures for the ideas of power they convey, we must not look to the keenest sensation, but to the highest estimate, accompanied with as much of the sensation as is compatible with it, and thus we shall consider those pictures as conveying the highest ideas of power which attain the most *perfect* end with the slightest possible means; not, observe, those in which, though much has been done with little, all has not been done, but from the picture, in which *all* has been done, and yet not a touch thrown away. The quantity of work in the sketch is necessarily less in proportion to the effect obtained than in the picture, but yet the picture involves the greater power, if, out of all the additional labour bestowed on it, not a touch has been lost.

For instance, there are few drawings of the present day that involve greater sensations of power than those of Frederick Tayler. Every dash tells, and the quantity of effect obtained is enormous, in proportion to the apparent means. But the effect obtained is not complete. Brilliant, beautiful, and right, as a sketch; the work is still far from perfection, as a drawing. On the contrary, there are few drawings of the present day that bear evidence of more labour bestowed, or more complicated means employed, than those of John Lewis. The result does not, at first, so much convey an impression

§ 7. The sensation of power ought not to be sought in imperfect art.

§ 8. Instance in pictures of modern artists.

of inherent power as of prolonged exertion: but the result is complete. Water-colour drawing can be carried no further; nothing has been left unfinished or untold. And on examination of the means employed, it is found and felt that not one touch out of the thousands employed has been thrown away;—that not one dot nor dash could be spared without loss of effect;—and that the exertion has been as swift as it has been prolonged—as bold as it has been persevering. The power involved in such a picture, and the idea and pleasure following on the estimate of it, are unquestionably far higher than can legitimately be traced in, or received from, the works of any other mere water-colour master now living.

§9. Connection between ideas of power with modes of execution.

But there is still farther ground for caution in pursuing the sensation of power, connected with the particular characters and modes of execution. This we shall be better able to understand by briefly reviewing the various excellences which may belong to execution, and give pleasure in it; though the full determination of what is desirable in it, and the critical examination of the execution of different artists, must be deferred, as will be immediately seen, until we are more fully acquainted with the principles of truth.

CHAPTER II.

OF IDEAS OF POWER, AS THEY ARE DEPENDENT UPON
EXECUTION.

By the term "Execution," I understand the right § 1. Meaning
mechanical use of the means of art to produce a given of the term
end. "execution."

All qualities of execution, properly so called, are § 2. The first
influenced by, and in a great degree dependent on, a far quality of exe-
higher power than that of mere execution,—knowledge cution is truth.
of truth. For exactly in proportion as an artist is certain
of his end, will he be swift and simple in his means;
and as he is accurate and deep in his knowledge, will
he be refined and precise in his touch. The first merit
of manipulation, then, is that delicate and ceaseless ex-
pression of refined truth which is carried out to the last
touch, and shadow of a touch, and which makes every
hair's-breadth of importance, and every gradation full of
meaning. It is not, properly speaking, execution; but
it is the only source of difference between the execution
of a common-place and of a perfect artist. The lowest
draughtsman, if he have spent the same time in handling
the brush, may be equal to the highest in the other
qualities of execution (in swiftness, simplicity, and
decision); but not in truth. It is in the perfection and
precision of the instantaneous line that the claim to
immortality is laid. And if this truth of truths be pre-
sent, all the other qualities of execution may well be
spared; and to those artists who wish to excuse their

ignorance and inaccuracy by a species of execution which is a perpetual proclamation, "qu'ils n'ont demeuré qu'un quart d'heure à le faire," we may reply with the truthful Alceste, "Monsieur, le temps ne fait rien à l'affaire."

§ 3. The second, simplicity.

The second quality of execution is simplicity. The more unpretending, quiet, and retiring the means, the more impressive their effect. Any ostentation, brilliancy, or pretension of touch;—any exhibition of power or quickness, merely as such;—above all, any attempt to render lines attractive at the expense of their meaning, is vice.

§ 4. The third, mystery.

The third is mystery. Nature is always mysterious and secret in her use of means; and art is always likest her when it is most inexplicable. That execution which is the most incomprehensible, and which therefore defies imitation (other qualities being supposed alike), is the best.

§ 5. The fourth, inadequacy; and the fifth, decision.

The fourth is inadequacy. The less sufficient the means appear to the end, the greater (as has been already noticed) will be the sensation of power.

The fifth is decision: the appearance, that is, that whatever is done, has been done fearlessly and at once; because this gives us the impression that both the fact to be represented, and the means necessary to its representation, were perfectly known.

§ 6. The sixth, velocity.

The sixth is velocity. Not only is velocity, or the appearance of it, agreeable as decision is, because it gives ideas of power and knowledge; but of two touches, as nearly as possible the same in other respects, the quickest will invariably be the best. Truth being supposed equally present in the shape and direction of both, there will be more evenness, grace, and variety, in the quick one than in the slow one. It will be more agreeable to the eye as a touch or line, and will possess more of the qualities of the lines of nature—gradation, uncertainty, and unity.

These six qualities are the only perfectly legitimate sources of pleasure in execution; but I might have added a seventh—strangeness, which in many cases is productive of a pleasure not altogether mean or degrading, though scarcely right. Supposing the other higher qualities first secured, it adds in no small degree to our impression of the artist's knowledge, if the means used be such as we should never have thought of, or should have thought adapted to a contrary effect. Let us, for instance, compare the execution of the bull's head in the left hand lowest corner of the Adoration of the Magi, in the Museum at Antwerp, with that in Berghem's landscape, No. 132 in the Dulwich Gallery. Rubens first scratches horizontally over his canvass a thin greyish brown, transparent and even, very much the colour of light wainscot; the horizontal strokes of the bristles being left so evident, that the whole might be taken for an imitation of wood, were it not for its transparency. On this ground the eye, nostril, and outline of the cheek are given with two or three rude, brown touches (about three or four minutes' work in all), though the head is colossal. The back-ground is then laid in with thick, solid, warm white, actually projecting all round the head, leaving it in dark intaglio. Finally, five thin and scratchy strokes of very cold bluish white are struck for the high light on the forehead and nose, and the head is complete. Seen within a yard of the canvass, it looks actually transparent—a flimsy, meaningless, distant shadow; while the back-ground looks solid, projecting, and near. From the right distance (ten or twelve yards off, whence alone the whole of the picture can be seen), it is a complete, rich, substantial, and living realization of the projecting head of the animal; while the back-ground falls far behind. Now there is no slight nor mean pleasure in perceiving such a result attained by means so strange. By Berghem, on the other hand, a dark back-ground is first laid in with ex-

§ 7. Strangeness an illegitimate source of pleasure in execution.

quisite delicacy and transparency, and on this the cow's head is actually modelled in luminous white, the separate locks of hair projecting from the canvass. No surprise, nor much pleasure of any kind, would be attendant on this execution, even were the result equally successful; and what little pleasure we had in it, vanishes, when on retiring from the picture, we find the head shining like a distant lantern, instead of substantial or near. Yet strangeness is not to be considered as a legitimate source of pleasure. That means which is most conducive to the end, should always be the most pleasurable; and that which is most conducive to the end, can be strange only to the ignorance of the spectator. This kind of pleasure is illegitimate, therefore, because it implies and requires, in those who feel it, ignorance of art.

§ 8. Yet even the legitimate sources of pleasure in execution are inconsistent with each other.

The legitimate sources of pleasure in execution are therefore truth, simplicity, mystery, inadequacy, decision, and velocity. But of these, be it observed, some are so far inconsistent with others, that they cannot be united in high degrees. Mystery with inadequacy, for instance, since to see that the means are inadequate, we must see what they are. Now the first three are the great qualities of execution, and the last three are the attractive ones, because on them are chiefly attendant the ideas of power. By the first three the attention is withdrawn from the means and fixed on the result: by the last three, withdrawn from the result and fixed on the means. To see that execution is swift or that it is decided, we must look away from its creation to observe it in the act of creating; we must think more of the pallet than of the picture, but simplicity and mystery compel the mind to leave the means and fix itself on the conception. Hence the danger of too great fondness for those sensations of power which are associated with the three last qualities of execution, for although it is most desirable that these should be present as far as they are consistent with the others, and

§ 9. And fondness for ideas of power leads to the adoption of the lowest.

though their visible absence is always painful and wrong, yet the moment the higher qualities are sacrificed to them in the least degree, we have a brilliant vice. Berghem and Salvator Rosa are fine instances of vicious execution dependent on too great fondness for sensations of power, vicious because intrusive and attractive in itself, instead of being subordinate to its results and forgotten in them. There is perhaps no greater stumbling-block in the artist's way, than the tendency to sacrifice truth and simplicity to decision and velocity,* captivating qualities, easy of attainment, and sure to attract attention and praise, while the delicate degree of truth which is at first sacrificed to them is so totally unappreciable by the majority of spectators, so difficult of attainment to the artist, that it is no wonder that efforts so arduous and unrewarded should be abandoned.

* I have here noticed only noble vices, the sacrifices of one excellence to another legitimate, but inferior one. There are, on the other hand, qualities of execution which are often sought for and praised, though scarcely by the class of persons for whom I am writing, in which everything is sacrificed to illegitimate and contemptible sources of pleasure, and these are vice throughout, and have no redeeming quality nor excusing aim. Such is that which is often thought so desirable in the Drawing-master, under the title of boldness, meaning that no touch is ever to be made less than the tenth of an inch broad; such is every effort on the part of the engraver to give roughness or direction of surface by wriggling or peculiarly directed lines, and such the softness and smoothness which are the great attraction of Carlo Dolci. These are the exhibition of particular powers, and tricks of the hand and fingers, in total forgetfulness of any end whatsoever to be attained thereby, and would scarcely deserve the pains of criticism were it not for the unaccountable delusion that makes men even of taste and feeling suppose that to be right in an engraving, which they would cry out against as detestable and intolerable in a drawing. How long are our engravers to be allowed to go on murdering the foregrounds of our great artists, twisting and wriggling and hatching and scratching over the smooth stones and glossy leaves, until St. Lawrence's gridiron is a jest to the martyrdom of the eye, "making out" everything that the artist intentionally concealed, and smothering everything that he made refined or conspicuous? When shall we have an engraver who will touch his steel as if he had fingers and feeling!

§ 10. Therefore
perilous.

But if the temptation be once yielded to, its consequences are fatal; there is no pause in the fall. I could name a celebrated modern artist—once a man of the highest power and promise, who is a glaring instance of the peril of such a course. Misled by the undue popularity of his swift execution, he has sacrificed to it, first precision, and then truth, and her associate, beauty. What was first neglect of nature, has become contradiction of her; what was once imperfection, is now falsehood; and all that was meritorious in his manner, is becoming the worst, because the most attractive of vices, decision without a foundation, and swiftness without an end.

§ 11. Recapitulation.

Such are the principal modes in which the ideas of power may become a dangerous attraction to the artist—a false test to the critic. But in all cases where they lead us astray it will be found that the error is caused by our preferring victory over a small *apparent* difficulty to victory over a great, but concealed one, and so that we keep this distinction constantly in view, (whether with reference to execution or to any other quality of art,) between the sensation and the intellectual estimate of power, we shall always find the ideas of power a just and high source of pleasure in every kind and grade of art.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE SUBLIME.

It may perhaps be wondered that in the division we have made of our subject, we have taken no notice of the sublime in art, and that in our explanation of that division we have not once used the word.

§ 1. Sublimity is the effect upon the mind of anything above it.

The fact is, that sublimity is not a specific term,—not a term descriptive of the effect of a particular class of ideas. Any thing which elevates the mind is sublime, and elevation of mind is produced by the contemplation of greatness of any kind; but chiefly, of course, by the greatness of the noblest things. Sublimity is therefore only another word for the effect of greatness upon the feelings. Greatness of matter, space, power, virtue, or beauty, are thus all sublime; and there is perhaps no desirable quality of a work of art, which in its perfection is not in some way or degree sublime.

I am fully prepared to allow of much ingenuity in Burke's theory of the sublime, as connected with self-preservation. There are few things so great as death; and there is perhaps nothing which banishes all littleness of thought and feeling in an equal degree with its contemplation. Everything, therefore, which in any way points to it, and, therefore, most dangers and powers over which we have little control, are in some degree sublime. But it is not the fear, observe, but the contemplation of death; not the instinctive shudder and struggle of self-preservation, but the deliberate mea-

§ 2. Burke's theory of the nature of the sublime incorrect, and why.

§ 3. Danger is sublime, but not the fear of it.

§ 4. The highest beauty is sublime.

§ 5. And generally whatever elevates the mind.

surement of the vast doom, which are really great or sublime in feeling. It is not while we shrink, but while we defy, that we receive or convey the highest conceptions of the fate. There is no sublimity in the agony of terror. Whether do we trace it most in the cry to the mountains, "fall on us," and to the hills, "cover us," or in the calmness of the prophecy—"And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God?" A little reflection will easily convince any one, that so far from the feelings of self-preservation being necessary to the sublime, their greatest action is totally destructive of it; and that there are few feelings less partaking of its nature than those of a coward. But the simple conception or idea of greatness of suffering or extent of destruction is sublime, whether there be any connection of that idea with ourselves or not. If we were placed beyond the reach of all peril or pain, the perception of these agencies in their influence on others would not be less sublime, not because peril or pain are sublime in their own nature, but because their contemplation, exciting compassion or fortitude, elevates the mind, and renders meanness of thought impossible. Beauty is not so often felt to be sublime; because, in many kinds of purely material beauty there is some truth in Burke's assertion, that "littleness" is one of its elements. But he who has not felt that there may be beauty without littleness, and that such beauty is a source of the sublime, is yet ignorant of the meaning of the ideal in art. I do not mean, in tracing the source of the sublime to greatness, to hamper myself with any fine-spun theory. I take the widest possible ground of investigation, that sublimity is found wherever anything elevates the mind; that is, wherever it contemplates anything above itself, and perceives it to be so. This is the simple philological signification of the word derived from *sublimis*; and will serve us much more easily, and be a far clearer and

more evident ground of argument than any mere metaphysical or more limited definition, while the proof of its justness will be naturally developed by its application to the different branches of art.

As, therefore, the sublime is not distinct from what § 6. The former is beautiful, nor from other sources of pleasure in art, ^{division of the} but is only a particular mode and manifestation of ^{subject is there-} ^{fore sufficient.} them, my subject will divide itself into the investigation of ideas of truth, beauty, and relation; and to each of these classes of ideas I destine a separate part of the work. The investigation of ideas of truth will enable us to determine the relative rank of artists as followers and historians of nature.

That of ideas of beauty will lead us to compare them in their attainment, first of what is agreeable in technical matters, then in colour and composition, finally and chiefly, in the purity of their conceptions of the ideal.

And that of ideas of relation will lead us to compare them as originators of new and just thought; as it is new, leading us to observe the powers of fancy and imagination; as it is just, the force of moral truth.

PART II.

OF TRUTH.

SECTION I.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES RESPECTING IDEAS OF TRUTH.

CHAPTER I.

OF IDEAS OF TRUTH IN THEIR CONNECTION WITH
THOSE OF BEAUTY AND RELATION.

§ 1. The two great ends of landscape painting are the representation of facts and thoughts.

IT cannot but be evident from the above division of the ideas conveyable by art, that the landscape painter must always have two great and distinct ends; the first, to induce in the spectator's mind the faithful conception of any natural objects whatsoever; the second, to guide the spectator's mind to those objects most worthy of its contemplation, and to inform him of the thoughts and feelings with which these were regarded by the artist himself.

In attaining the first end the painter only places the spectator where he stands himself; he sets him before the landscape and leaves him. The spectator is alone. He may follow out his own thoughts as he would in the natural solitude, or he may remain untouched, unreflecting and regardless, as his disposition may incline him. But he has nothing of thought given to him, no

new ideas, no unknown feelings, forced on his attention or his heart. The artist is his conveyance, not his companion,—his horse, not his friend. But in attaining the second end, the artist not only *places* the spectator, but *talks* to him, makes him a sharer in his own strong feelings and quick thoughts, hurries him away in his own enthusiasm, guides him to all that is beautiful, snatches him from all that is base, and leaves him more than delighted,—ennobled and instructed, under the sense of having not only beheld a new scene, but of having held communion with a new mind, and having been endowed for a time with the keen perception and the impetuous emotion of a nobler and more penetrating intelligence.

Each of these different aims of art will necessitate a different system of choice of objects to be represented. The first does not indeed imply choice at all, but it is usually united with the selection of such objects as may be naturally and constantly pleasing to all men, at all times, and this selection when perfect and careful, leads to the attainment of the pure ideal. But the artist aiming at the second end, selects his objects for their meaning and character, rather than for their beauty, and uses them rather to throw light upon the particular thought he wishes to convey, than as in themselves objects of unconnected admiration.

§ 2. They induce a different choice of material subjects.

Now, although the first mode of selection, when guided by deep reflection, may rise to the production of works possessing a noble and ceaseless influence on the human mind, it is likely to degenerate into, or rather, in nine cases out of ten it never goes beyond, a mere appeal to such parts of our animal nature as are constant and common—shared by all, and perpetual in all; such, for instance, as the pleasure of the eye in the opposition of a cold and warm colour, or of a massy form with a delicate one. It also tends to induce constant repetition of the same ideas, and use of the same principles; it

§ 3. The first mode of selection apt to produce sameness and repetition.

gives rise to those *rules* of art which properly excited Reynolds's indignation when applied to its higher efforts; it is the source of, and the apology for, that host of technicalities and absurdities which in all ages has been the curse of art and the crown of the connoisseur; and of those "standard" pictures with which half the walls of Europe are covered, and for the manufacture of which recipes are to be found in most works on art. "Take one-eighth light, three-eighths middle tint, four-eighths shadow; mix carefully, flavour with cochineal, cool with ultramarine, and serve up with sentiment." Nay, even where a high ideal has been sought for, the search seldom produces more than one good picture, on which a few clever but monotonous changes are rung by the artist himself, and innumerable discords by his imitators, ending in the multiplication *ad nauseam* of the legitimate landscape ragout, composed of a large tree, a bridge, a city, a river, and a fisherman.

§ 4. The second necessitating variety.

But art, in its second and highest aim, is not an appeal to constant animal feelings, but an expression and awakening of individual thought: it is therefore as various and as extended in its efforts as the compass and grasp of the directing mind; and we feel, in each of its results, that we are looking, not at a specimen of a tradesman's wares, of which he is ready to make us a dozen to match, but at one coruscation of a perpetually active mind, like which there has not been, and will not be another.

§ 5. Yet the first is delightful to all.

Hence, although there can be no doubt which of these branches of art is the highest, it is equally evident that the first will be the most generally felt and appreciated. For the simple statement of the truths of nature must in itself be pleasing to every order of mind; because every truth of nature is more or less beautiful; and if there be just and right selection of the more important of these truths—based, as above explained, on

feelings and desires common to all mankind—the facts so selected must, in some degree, be delightful to all, and their value appreciable by all: more or less, indeed, as their senses and instinct have been rendered more or less acute and accurate by use and study; but in some degree by all, and in the same way by all. But the highest art, being based on sensations of peculiar minds, sensations occurring to *them* only at particular times, and to a plurality of mankind perhaps never, and being expressive of thoughts which could only rise out of a mass of the most extended knowledge, and of dispositions modified in a thousand ways by peculiarity of intellect—can only be met and understood by persons having some sort of sympathy with the high and solitary minds which produced it—sympathy only to be felt by minds in some degree high and solitary themselves. He alone can appreciate the art, who could comprehend the conversation of the painter, and share in his emotion, in moments of his most fiery passion and most original thought. And whereas the true meaning and end of his art must thus be sealed to thousands, or misunderstood by them; so also, as he is sometimes obliged, in working out his own peculiar end, to set at defiance those constant laws which have arisen out of our lower and changeless desires, that whose purpose is unseen, is frequently in its means and parts displeasing.

But this want of extended influence in high art, be it especially observed, proceeds from no want of truth in the art itself, but from a want of sympathy in the spectator with those feelings in the artist which prompt him to the utterance of one truth rather than of another. For (and this is what I wish at present especially to insist upon) although it is possible to reach what I have stated to be the first end of art, the representation of facts, without reaching the second, the representation of thoughts, yet it is altogether impossible to reach the second without having previously reached

§ 6. The second only to a few.

§ 7. The first necessary to the second.

the first. I do not say that a man cannot think, having false basis and material for thought; but that a false thought is worse than the want of thought, and therefore is not art. And this is the reason why, though I consider the second as the real and only important end of all art, I call the representation of facts the first end; because it is necessary to the other and must be attained before it. It is the foundation of all art; like real foundations it may be little thought of when a brilliant fabric is raised on it; but it must be there: and as few buildings are beautiful unless every line and column of their mass have reference to their foundation, and are suggestive of its existence and strength, so nothing can be beautiful in art which does not in all its parts suggest and guide to the foundation, even where no undecorated portion of it is visible; while the noblest edifices of art are built of such pure and fine crystal that the foundation may all be seen through them; and then many, while they do not see what is built upon that first story, yet much admire the solidity of its brickwork; thinking they understand all that is to be understood of the matter: while others stand beside them, looking not at the low story, but up into the heaven at that building of crystal in which the builder's spirit is dwelling. And thus, though we want the thoughts and feelings of the artist as well as the truth, yet they must be thoughts arising out of the knowledge of truth, and feelings arising out of the contemplation of truth. We do not want his mind to be as a badly blown glass, that distorts what we see through it; but like a glass of sweet and strange colour, that gives new tones to what we see through it; and a glass of rare strength and clearness too, to let us see more than we could ourselves, and bring nature up to us and near to us. Nothing can atone for the want of truth, not the most brilliant imagination, the most playful fancy, the most pure feeling, (supposing that feeling

§ 8. The exceeding importance of truth.

could be pure and false at the same time) not the most exalted conception, nor the most comprehensive grasp of intellect, can make amends for the want of truth, and that for two reasons; first, because falsehood is in itself revolting and degrading; and secondly, because nature is so immeasurably superior to all that the human mind can conceive, that every departure from her is a fall beneath her, so that there can be no such thing as an ornamental falsehood. All falsehood must be a blot as well as a sin, an injury as well a deception.

We shall, in consequence, find that no artist can be graceful, imaginative, or original, unless he be truthful; and that the pursuit of beauty, instead of leading us away from truth, increases the desire for it and the necessity of it tenfold; so that those artists who are really great in imaginative power, will be found to have based their boldness of conception on a mass of knowledge far exceeding that possessed by those who pride themselves on its accumulation without regarding its use. Coldness and want of passion in a picture, are not signs of the accuracy, but of the paucity of its statements; true vigour and brilliancy are not signs of audacity, but of knowledge.

Hence it follows that it is in the power of all, with care and time, to form something like a just judgment of the relative merits of artists; for although with respect to the feeling and passion of pictures it is often as impossible to criticise as to appreciate, except to such as are in some degree equal in powers of mind, and in some respects the same in modes of mind, with those whose works they judge; yet, with respect to the representation of facts, it is possible for all, by attention, to form a right judgment of the respective powers and attainments of every artist. Truth is a bar of comparison at which they may all be examined, and according to the rank they take in this examination, will almost invariably be that which, if capable of appreciating them

§ 9. Coldness
or want of
beauty no sign
of truth.

§ 10. How
truth may be
considered a
just criterion
of all art.

in every respect, we should be just in assigning them, so strict is the connection, so constant the relation between the sum of knowledge and the extent of thought, between accuracy of perception and vividness of idea.

I shall endeavour, therefore, in the present portion of the work, to enter with care and impartiality into the investigation of the claims of the schools of ancient and modern landscape to faithfulness in representing nature. I shall pay no regard whatsoever to what may be thought beautiful, or sublime, or imaginative. I shall look only for truth, bare, clear, downright statement of facts; showing in each particular, as far as I am able, what the truth of nature is, and then seeking for the plain expression of it, and for that alone. And I shall thus endeavour, totally regardless of fervour of imagination or brilliancy of effect, or any other of their more captivating qualities, to examine and to judge the works of the great living painter, who is, I believe, imagined by the majority of the public, to paint more falsehood and less fact than any other known master. We shall see with what reason.

CHAPTER II.

THAT THE TRUTH OF NATURE IS NOT TO BE DISCERNED
BY THE UNEDUCATED SENSES.

It may be here inquired by the reader, with much appearance of reason, why I think it necessary to devote a separate portion of the work to the showing of what is truthful in art. "Cannot we," say the public, "see what nature is with our own eyes, and find out for ourselves what is like her?" It will be as well to determine this question before we go farther, because if this were possible, there would be little need of criticism or teaching with respect to art.

§ 1. The common self-deception of men with respect to their power of discerning truth.

Now I have just said that it is possible for all men, by care and attention, to form a just judgment of the fidelity of artists to nature. To do this no peculiar powers of mind are required, no sympathy with particular feelings, nothing which every man of ordinary intellect does not in some degree possess,—powers, namely, of observation and intelligence, which by cultivation may be brought to a high degree of perfection and acuteness. But until this cultivation has been bestowed, and until the instrument thereby perfected has been employed in a consistent series of careful observation, it is as absurd as it is audacious to pretend to form any judgment whatsoever respecting the truth of art: and my first business, before going a step farther, must be to combat the nearly universal error of belief among the thoughtless and unreflecting, that they know either

what nature is, or what is like her, that they can discover truth by instinct, and that their minds are such pure Venice glass as to be shocked by all treachery. I have to prove to them that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in their philosophy, and that the truth of nature is a part of the truth of God; to him who does not search it out, darkness, as it is to him who does, infinity.

§ 2. Men usually see little of what is before their eyes.

The first great mistake that people make in the matter, is the supposition that they must *see* a thing if it be before their eyes. They forget the great truth told them by Locke, Book ii. chap. 9. § 3.—“This is certain, that whatever alterations are made in the body, if they reach not the mind, whatever impressions are made on the outward parts, if they are not taken notice of within, there is no perception. Fire may burn our bodies, with no other effect than it does a billet, unless the motion be continued to the brain, and there the sense of heat or idea of pain be produced in the mind, wherein consists actual perception. How often may a man observe in himself, that whilst his mind is intently employed in the contemplation of some subjects and curiously surveying some ideas that are there, it takes no notice of impressions of sounding bodies, made upon the organ of hearing, with the same attention that uses to be for the producing the ideas of sound? A sufficient impulse there may be on the organ, but it not reaching the observation of the mind, there follows no perception, and though the motion that uses to produce the idea of sound be made in the ear, yet no sound is heard.” And what is here said, which all must feel by their own experience to be true, is more remarkably and necessarily the case with sight than with any other of the senses, for this reason, that the ear is not accustomed to exercise constantly its functions of hearing, it is accustomed to stillness, and the occurrence of a sound of any kind whatsoever is apt to awake attention,

and be followed with perception, in proportion to the degree of sound; but the eye during our waking hours, exercises constantly its function of seeing; it is its constant habit; we always, as far as the *bodily* organ is concerned, see something, and we always see in the same degree, so that the occurrence of sight, as such, to the eye, is only the continuance of its necessary state of action, and awakes no attention whatsoever, except by the particular nature and quality of the sight. And thus, unless the minds of men are particularly directed to the impressions of sight, objects pass perpetually before the eyes without conveying any impression to the brain at all, and so pass actually unseen, not merely unnoticed, but in the full clear sense of the word, unseen. And numbers of men being pre-occupied with business or care of some description, totally unconnected with the impressions of sight, such is actually the case with them, they receiving from nature only the inevitable sensations of blueness, redness, darkness, light, &c., and except at particular and rare moments, no more whatsoever.

The degree of ignorance of external nature in which men may thus remain, depends therefore, partly on the number and character of the subjects with which their minds may be otherwise occupied, and partly on a natural want of sensibility to the power of beauty of form, and the other attributes of external objects. I do not think that there is ever such absolute incapacity in the eye for distinguishing and receiving pleasure from certain forms and colours, as there is in persons who are technically said to have no ear, for distinguishing notes, but there is naturally every degree of bluntness and acuteness, both for perceiving the truth of form, and for receiving pleasure from it when perceived. And although I believe even the lowest degree of these faculties can be expanded almost unlimitedly by cultivation, the pleasure received never rewards the labour necessary, and the pursuit is abandoned. So that while

§ 3. But more or less in proportion to their natural sensibility to what is beautiful,

§ 4. Connected
with a perfect
state of moral
feeling.

in those whose sensations are naturally acute and vivid, the call of external nature is so strong that it must be obeyed, and is ever heard louder as the approach to her is nearer,—in those whose sensations are naturally blunt, the call is overpowered at once by other thoughts, and their faculties of perception, weak originally, die of disuse. With this kind of bodily sensibility to colour and form is intimately connected that higher sensibility which we revere as one of the chief attributes of all noble minds, and as the chief spring of real poetry. I believe this kind of sensibility may be entirely resolved into the acuteness of bodily sense of which I have been speaking, associated with love, love I mean in its infinite and holy functions, as it embraces divine and human and brutal intelligences, and hallows the physical perception of external objects by association, gratitude, veneration, and other pure feelings of our moral nature. And although the discovery of truth is in itself altogether intellectual, and dependent merely on our powers of physical perception and abstract intellect, wholly independent of our moral nature, yet these instruments (perception and judgment) are so sharpened and brightened, and so far more swiftly and effectively used, when they have the energy and passion of our moral nature to bring them into action—perception is so quickened by love, and judgment so tempered by veneration, that, practically, a man of deadened moral sensation is always dull in his perception of truth, and thousands of the highest and most divine truths of nature are wholly concealed from him, however constant and indefatigable may be his intellectual search. Thus then, the farther we look, the more we are limited in the number of those to whom we should choose to appeal as judges of truth, and the more we perceive how great a number of mankind may be partially incapacitated from either discovering or feeling it.

Next to sensibility, which is necessary for the perception of facts, comè reflection and memory, which are necessary for the retention of them, and recognition of their resemblances. For a man may receive impression after impression, and that vividly and with delight, and yet, if he take no care to reason upon those impressions and trace them to their sources, he may remain totally ignorant of the facts that produced them; nay, may attribute them to facts with which they have no connection, or may coin causes for them that have no existence at all. And the more sensibility and imagination a man possesses, the more likely will he be to fall into error; for then he will see whatever he expects, and admire and judge with his heart, and not with his eyes. How many people are misled, by what has been said and sung of the serenity of Italian skies, to suppose they must be more *blue* than the skies of the north, and think that they see them so; whereas the sky of Italy is far more dull and grey in colour than the skies of the north, and is distinguished only by its intense repose of light. And this is confirmed by Benvenuto Cellini, who, I remember, on his first entering France, is especially struck by the clearness of the sky, as contrasted with the *mist* of Italy. And what is more strange still, when people see in a painting what they suppose to have been the source of their impressions, they will affirm it to be truthful, though they feel no such impression resulting from it. Thus, though day after day they may have been impressed by the tone and warmth of an Italian sky, yet not having traced the feeling to its source, and supposing themselves impressed by its *blueness*, they will affirm a blue sky in a painting to be truthful, and reject the most faithful rendering of all the real attributes of Italy as cold or dull. And this influence of the imagination over the senses, is peculiarly observable in the perpetual disposition of mankind to suppose that they *see* what they *know*, and *vice versa*

§ 5. And of the intellectual powers.

§ 6. How sight depends upon previous knowledge.

in their not seeing what they do not know. Thus, if a child be asked to draw the corner of a house, he will lay down something in the form of the letter T. He has no conception that the two lines of the roof, which he knows to be level, produce on his eye the impression of a slope. It requires repeated and close attention before he detects this fact, or can be made to feel that his lines on the paper are false. And the Chinese, children in all things, suppose a good perspective drawing to be as false as we feel their plate patterns to be, or wonder at the strange buildings which come to a point at the end. And all the early works, whether of nations or of men, show, by their want of *shade*, how little the eye, without knowledge, is to be depended upon to discover truth. The eye of a Red Indian, keen enough to find the trace of his enemy or his prey, even in the unnatural turn of a trodden leaf, is yet so blunt to the impressions of shade, that Mr. Catlin mentions his once having been in great danger from having painted a portrait with the face in half light, which the untutored observers imagined and affirmed to be the painting of half a face. Barry, in his sixth lecture, takes notice of the same want of actual *sight* in the early painters of Italy. "The imitations," he says, "of early art are like those of children,—nothing is seen in the spectacle before us, unless it be previously known and sought for; and numberless observable differences between the age of ignorance and that of knowledge, show how much the contraction or extension of our sphere of vision depends upon other considerations than the mere returns of our natural optics. The people of those ages only saw so much, and admired it, because they knew no more." And the deception which takes place so broadly in cases like these, has infinitely greater influence over our judgment of the more intricate and less tangible truths of nature. We are constantly supposing that we see what experience only has shown us,

or can show us, to have existence, constantly missing the sight of what we do not know beforehand to be visible: and painters, to the last hour of their lives, are apt to fall in some degree into the error of painting what exists, rather than what they can see. I shall prove the extent of this error more completely hereafter.

Be it also observed, that all these difficulties would lie in the way, even if the truths of nature were always the same, constantly repeated and brought before us. But the truths of nature are one eternal change—one infinite variety. There is no bush on the face of the globe exactly like another bush;—there are no two trees in the forest whose boughs bend into the same network, nor two leaves on the same tree which could not be told one from the other, nor two waves in the sea exactly alike. And out of this mass of various, yet agreeing beauty, it is by long attention only that the conception of the constant character—the ideal form—hinted at by all, yet assumed by none, is fixed upon the imagination for its standard of truth.

It is not singular, therefore, nor in any way disgraceful, that the majority of spectators are totally incapable of appreciating the truth of nature, when fully set before them; but it is both singular and disgraceful that it is so difficult to convince them of their own incapability. Ask a connoisseur, who has scampered over all Europe, the shape of the leaf of an elm, and the chances are ninety to one that he cannot tell you; and yet he will be voluble of criticism on every painted landscape from Dresden to Madrid, and pretend to tell you whether they are like nature or not. Ask an enthusiastic chatterer in the Sistine Chapel how many ribs he has, and you get no answer; but it is odds that you do not get out of the door without his informing you that he considers such and such a figure badly drawn!

§ 7. The difficulty increased by the variety of truths in nature.

§ 8. We recognize objects by their least important attributes. Compare Part I. Sect. I. chap. 4.

A few such interrogations as these might indeed convict, if not convince the mass of spectators of incapability, were it not for the universal reply, that they can recognize what they cannot describe, and feel what is truthful, though they do not know what is truth. And this is, to a certain degree, true: a man may recognise the portrait of his friend, though he cannot, if you ask him apart, tell you the shape of his nose or the height of his forehead; and every one could tell Nature herself from an imitation; why not then, it will be asked, what is like her from what is not? For this simple reason, that we constantly recognise things by their least important attributes, and by help of very few of those: and if these attributes exist not in the imitation, though there may be thousands of others far higher and more valuable, yet if those be wanting, or imperfectly rendered, by which we are accustomed to recognise the object, we deny the likeness; while if these be given, though all the great and valuable and important attributes may be wanting, we affirm the likeness. Recognition is no proof of real and intrinsic resemblance. We recognise our books by their bindings, though the true and essential characteristics lie inside. A man is known to his dog by the smell—to his tailor by the coat—to his friend by the smile: each of these know him, but how little, or how much, depends on the dignity of the intelligence. That which is truly and indeed characteristic of the man, is known only to God. One portrait of a man may possess exact accuracy of feature, and no atom of expression; it may be, to use the ordinary terms of admiration bestowed on such portraits by those whom they please, "as like as it can stare." Every body, down to his cat, would know this. Another portrait may have neglected or misrepresented the features, but may have given the flash of the eye, and the peculiar radiance of the lip, seen on him only in

his hours of highest mental excitement. None but his friends would know this. Another may have given none of his ordinary expressions, but one which he wore in the most excited instant of his life, when all his secret passions and all his highest powers were brought into play at once. None but those who had then seen him might recognise *this* as like. But which would be the most truthful portrait of the *man*? The first gives the accidents of body—the sport of climate, and food, and time—which corruption inhabits, and the worm waits for. The second gives the stamp of the soul upon the flesh; but it is the soul seen in the emotions which it shares with many—which may not be characteristic of its essence—the results of habit, and education, and accident—a gloze, whether purposely worn or unconsciously assumed, perhaps totally contrary to all that is rooted and real in the mind that it conceals. The third has caught the trace of all that was most hidden and most mighty, when all hypocrisy, and all habit, and all petty and passing emotion—the ice, and the bank, and the foam of the immortal river—were shivered, and broken, and swallowed up in the awakening of its inward strength; when the call and claim of some divine motive had brought into visible being those latent forces and feelings which the spirit's own volition could not summon, nor its consciousness comprehend; which God only knew, and God only could awaken, the depth and the mystery of its peculiar and separating attributes. And so it is with external Nature: she has a body and a soul like man; but her soul is the Deity. It is possible to represent the body without the spirit; and this shall be like to those whose senses are only cognizant of body. It is possible to represent the spirit in its ordinary and inferior manifestations; and this shall be like to those who have not watched for its moments of power. It is possible to represent the spirit in its secret and high

operations; and this shall be like only to those to whose watching they have been revealed. All these are truth; but according to the dignity of the truths he can represent or feel, is the power of the painter, and the justice of the judge.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF TRUTHS : — FIRST,
THAT PARTICULAR TRUTHS ARE MORE IMPORTANT
THAN GENERAL ONES.

I HAVE in the last chapter affirmed that we usually recognize objects by their least essential characteristics. This very naturally excites the enquiry what I consider their important characteristics, and why I call one truth more important than another. And this question must be immediately determined, because it is evident, that in judging of the truth of painters, we shall have to consider not only the accuracy with which individual truths are given, but the relative importance of the truths themselves; for as it constantly happens that the powers of art are unable to render *all* truths, that artist must be considered the most truthful who has preserved the most important at the expense of the most trifling.

§ 1. Necessity of determining the relative importance of truths.

Now, if we are to begin our investigation in Aristotle's way, and look at the *φαινόμενα* of the subject, we shall immediately stumble over a maxim which is in everybody's mouth, and which, as it is understood in practice, is true and useful, as it is usually applied in argument, false and misleading. "General truths are more important than particular ones." Often, when in conversation, I have been praising Turner for his perpetual variety, and for giving so particular and separate a character to each of his compositions, that the mind of the

§ 2. Misapplication of the aphorism : "General truths are more important than particular ones."

painter can only be estimated by seeing all that he has ever done, and that nothing can be prophesied of a picture coming into existence on his easel, but that it will be totally different in idea from all that he has ever done before; and when I have opposed this inexhaustible knowledge or imagination, whichever it may be, to the perpetual repetition of some half-dozen conceptions by Claude and Poussin, I have been met by the formidable objection, enunciated with much dignity and self-satisfaction on the part of my antagonist—"That is not painting general truths, that is painting particular truths." Now there must be something wrong in that application of a principle which would make the variety and abundance which we look for as the greatest sign of intellect in the writer, the greatest sign of error in the painter; and we shall accordingly see, by an application of it to other matters, that taken without limitation, the whole proposition is utterly false. For instance, Mrs. Jameson somewhere mentions the exclamation of a lady of her acquaintance, more desirous to fill a pause in conversation than abundant in sources of observation. "What an excellent book the Bible is!" This was a very general truth indeed; a truth predicable of the Bible in common with many other books, but it certainly is neither striking nor important. Had the lady exclaimed—"How evidently is the Bible a divine revelation!" she would have expressed a particular truth, one predicable of the Bible only; but certainly far more interesting and important. Had she, on the contrary, informed us that the Bible was a book, she would have been still more general, and still less entertaining. If I ask any one who somebody else is, and receive for answer that he is a man, I get little satisfaction for my pains; but if I am told that he is Sir Isaac Newton, I immediately thank my neighbour for his information. The fact is, and the above instances may serve at once to prove it if it be not self-evident,

§ 3. Falseness of this maxim, taken without explanation.

§ 4. Generality important in the subject,

that generality gives importance to the *subject*, and limitation or particularity to the *predicate*. If I say that such and such a man in China is an opium eater, I say nothing very interesting, because my subject (such a man) is particular. If I say that all men in China are opium eaters, I say something interesting, because my subject (all men) is general. If I say that all men in China eat, I say nothing interesting, because my predicate (eat) is general. If I say that all men in China eat opium, I say something interesting, because my predicate (eat opium) is particular.

particularity in
the predicate.

Now almost everything which (with reference to a given subject) a painter has to ask himself whether he shall represent or not, is a predicate. Hence in art, particular truths are usually more important than general ones.

How is it then that anything so plain as this should be contradicted by one of the most universally received aphorisms respecting art? A little reflection will show us under what limitations this maxim may be true in practice.

It is self-evident that when we are painting or describing anything, those truths must be the most important which are most characteristic of what is to be told or represented. Now that which is first and most broadly characteristic of a thing is that which distinguishes its genus, or which makes it what it is. For instance, that which makes drapery *be* drapery, is not its being made of silk or worsted or flax, for things are made of all these which are not drapery, but the ideas peculiar to drapery, the properties which, when inherent in a thing, make it drapery, are extension, non-elastic flexibility, unity and comparative thinness. Everything which has these properties, a waterfall, for instance, if united and extended, or a net of weeds over a wall, is drapery, as much as silk or woollen stuff is. So that these ideas separate drapery in our minds from everything else; they are peculiarly characteristic

§ 5. The importance of truths of species is not owing to their generality.

of it, and therefore are the most important group of ideas connected with it; and so with everything else, that which makes the thing what it is, is the most important idea, or group of ideas connected with the thing. But as this idea must necessarily be common to all individuals of the species it belongs to, it is a general idea with respect to that species; while other ideas, which are not characteristic of the species, and are therefore in reality general (as black or white are terms applicable to more things than drapery), are yet particular with respect to that species, being predicable only of certain individuals of it. Hence it is carelessly and falsely said that general ideas are more important than particular ones; carelessly and falsely, I say, because the so called general idea is important, not because it is common to all the individuals of that species, but because it separates that species from everything else. It is the distinctiveness, not the universality of the truth, which renders it important. And the so called particular idea is unimportant, not because it is not predicable of the whole species, but because it *is* predicable of things out of that species. It is not its individuality, but its generality which renders it unimportant. So then, truths are important just in proportion as they are characteristic, and are valuable, primarily, as they separate the species from all other created things; secondarily, as they separate the individuals of that species from one another: thus "silken" or "woollen" are unimportant ideas with respect to drapery because they neither separate the species from other things, nor even the individuals of that species from one another, since though not common to the whole of it, they are common to indefinite numbers of it; but the particular folds into which any piece of drapery may happen to fall, being different in many particulars from those into which any other piece of drapery will fall, are expressive not only of the

§ 6. All truths
valuable as
they are
characteristic.

characters of the species, (flexibility, non-elasticity, &c.), but of individuality and definite character in the case immediately observed, and are consequently most important and necessary ideas. So in a man, to be short-legged or long-nosed or anything else of accidental quality, does not distinguish him from other short-legged or long-nosed animals, but the important truths respecting a man are, first, the marked development of that distinctive organization which separates him as man from other animals, and secondly that group of qualities which distinguish the individual from all other men, which make him Paul or Judas, Newton or Shakspeare.

Such are the real sources of importance in truths as far as they are considered with reference merely to their being general, or particular; but there are other sources of importance which give farther weight to the ordinary opinion of the greater value of those which are general, and which render this opinion right in practice; I mean the intrinsic beauty of the truths themselves, a quality which it is not here the place to investigate, but which must just be noticed, as invariably adding value to truths of species rather than to those of individuality. The qualities and properties which characterise man or any other animal as a species, are the perfection of his or its form and mind, almost all individual differences arising from imperfections; hence a truth of species is the more valuable to art, because it must always be a beauty, while a truth of individuals is commonly in some sort or way, a defect.

Again, a truth which may be of great interest, when an object is viewed by itself, may be objectionable when it is viewed in relation to other objects. Thus if we were painting a piece of drapery as our whole subject, it would be proper to give in it every source of entertainment, which particular truths could supply, to give it varied colour and delicate texture; but if we paint

§ 7. Otherwise truths of species are valuable, because beautiful.

§ 8. And many truths, valuable if separate, may be objectionable in connection with others.

this same piece of drapery, as part of the dress of a Madonna, all these ideas of richness or texture become thoroughly contemptible, and unfit to occupy the mind at the same moment with the idea of the Virgin. The conception of drapery is then to be suggested by the simplest and slightest means possible, and all notions of texture and detail are to be rejected with utter reprobation; but this, observe, is not because they are particular or general or anything else, with respect to the drapery itself, but because they draw the attention to the dress instead of the saint, and disturb and degrade the imagination and the feelings; hence we ought to give the conception of the drapery in the most unobtrusive way possible, by rendering those essential qualities distinctly, which are necessary to the very existence of drapery, and not one more.

With these last two sources of the importance of truths, we have nothing to do at present, as they are dependent upon ideas of beauty and relation: I merely allude to them now, to show that all that is alleged by Sir J. Reynolds and other scientific writers respecting the kind of truths proper to be represented by the painter or sculptor is perfectly just and right, while yet the principle on which they base their selection (that general truths are more important than particular ones) is altogether false. Canova's Perseus in the Vatican is entirely spoiled by an unlucky *tassel* in the folds of the mantle (which the next admirer of Canova who passes would do well to knock off), but it is spoiled not because this is a particular truth, but because it is a contemptible, unnecessary, and ugly truth. The button which fastens the vest of the Daniel is as much a particular truth as this, but it is a necessary one, and the idea of it is given by the simplest possible means; hence it is right and beautiful.

§ 9. Recapitulation.

Finally, then, it is to be remembered that all truths, as far as their being particular or general affects their

value at all, are valuable in proportion as they are particular, and valueless in proportion as they are general, or to express the proposition in simpler terms, every truth is valuable in proportion as it is characteristic of the thing of which it is affirmed.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF TRUTHS :—SECONDLY,
THAT RARE TRUTHS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN
FREQUENT ONES.

§ 1. No accidental violation of nature's principles should be re-presented.

It will be necessary next for us to determine how far frequency or rarity can affect the importance of truths, and whether the artist is to be considered the most truthful who paints what is common or what is unusual in nature.

Now the whole determination of this question depends upon whether the unusual fact be a violation of nature's general principles, or the application of some of those principles in a peculiar and striking way. Nature sometimes, though very rarely, violates her own principles; it is her principle to make every thing beautiful, but now and then for an instant, she permits what, compared with the rest of her works, might be called ugly: it is true that even these rare blemishes are permitted, as I have above said, for a good purpose, (Part I. Sec. I. Chap. 5.), they are valuable in nature, and used as she uses them, are equally valuable (as instantaneous discords) in art; but the artist who should seek after these exclusively, and paint nothing else, though he might be able to point to something in nature as the original of every one of his uglinesses, would yet be, in the strict sense of the word, false,—false to nature, and disobedient to her laws. For instance, it is the practice

of nature to give character to the outlines of her clouds by perpetual angles and right lines. Perhaps once in a month, by diligent watching, we might be able to see a cloud altogether rounded and made up of curves, but the artist who paints nothing but curved clouds must yet be considered thoroughly and inexcusably false.

But the case is widely different, when instead of a principle violated, we have one extraordinarily carried out or manifested under unusual circumstances. Though nature is constantly beautiful, she does not exhibit her highest powers of beauty constantly, for then they would satiate us and pall upon our senses. It is necessary to their appreciation that they should be rarely shown. Her finest touches are things which must be watched for; her most perfect passages of beauty are the most evanescent. She is constantly doing something beautiful for us, but it is something which she has not done before and will not do again; some exhibition of her general powers in particular circumstances which, if we do not catch at the instant it is passing, will not be repeated for us. Now they are these evanescent passages of perfected beauty, these perpetually varied examples of utmost power, which the artist ought to seek for and arrest. No supposition can be more absurd than that effects or truths frequently exhibited are more characteristic of nature than those which are equally necessary by her laws, though rarer in occurrence. Both the frequent and the rare are parts of the same great system, to give either exclusively is imperfect truth, and to repeat the same effect or thought in two pictures is wasted life. What should we think of a poet who should keep all his life repeating the same thought in different words? and why should we be more lenient to the parrot-painter who has learned one lesson from the page of nature, and keeps stammering it out with eternal repetition without turning the leaf? Is it less tautology to describe a thing over and

§ 2. But the cases in which those principles have been strikingly exemplified.

§ 3. Which are comparatively rare.

§ 4. All repetition is blameable.

over again with lines, than it is with words? The teaching of nature is as varied and infinite as it is constant; and the duty of the painter is to watch for every one of her lessons, and to give (for human life will admit of nothing more) those in which she has manifested each of her principles in the most peculiar and striking way. The deeper his research and the rarer the phenomena he has noted, the more valuable will his works be; to repeat himself, even in a single instance, is treachery to nature, for a thousand human lives would not be enough to give one instance of the perfect manifestation of each of her powers, and as for combining or classifying them, as well might a preacher expect in one sermon to express and explain every divine truth which can be gathered out of God's revelation, as a painter expect in one composition to express and illustrate every lesson which can be received from God's creation. Both are commentators on infinity, and the duty of both is to take for each discourse one essential truth, seeking particularly and insisting especially on those which are less palpable to ordinary observation, and more likely to escape an indolent research, and to impress that, and that alone, upon those whom they address, with every illustration that can be furnished by their knowledge, and every adornment attainable by their power. And the real truthfulness of the painter is in proportion to the number and variety of the facts he has so illustrated, those facts being always, as above observed, the realization, not the violation of a general principle. The quantity of truth is in proportion to the number of such facts, and its value and instructiveness in proportion to their rarity. All really great pictures, therefore, exhibit the general habits of nature, manifested in some peculiar, rare, and beautiful way.

§ 5. The duty of the painter is the same as that of a preacher.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF TRUTHS:—THIRDLY,
THAT TRUTHS OF COLOUR ARE THE LEAST IMPORTANT
OF ALL TRUTHS.

IN the two last chapters, we have pointed out general tests of the importance of all truths, which will be sufficient at once to distinguish certain classes of properties in bodies, as more necessary to be told than others, because more characteristic, either of the particular thing to be represented, or of the principles of nature.

§ 1. Difference between primary and secondary qualities in bodies.

According to Locke, Book ii. chap. 8, there are three sorts of qualities in bodies: first, the “bulk, figure, number, situation, and motion or rest of their solid parts: those that are in them, whether we perceive them or not.” These he calls primary qualities. Secondly, “the power that is in any body to operate after a peculiar manner on any of our senses” (sensible qualities). And thirdly, “the power that is in any body to make such a change in another body as that it shall operate on our senses differently from what it did before: these last being usually called *powers*.”

Hence he proceeds to prove that those which he calls primary qualities are indeed part of the essence of the body, and characteristic of it; but that the two other kinds of qualities, which together he calls secondary, are neither of them more than *powers* of producing on other objects, or in us, certain effects and sensations.

§ 2. The first
are fully
characteristic,
the second
imperfectly so.

Now a power of influence is always equally characteristic of two objects—the active and passive; for it is as much necessary that there should be a power in the object suffering to receive the impression, as in the object acting, to give the impression. (Compare Locke, Book ii. chap. 21, sect. 2.) For supposing two people, as is frequently the case, perceive different scents in the same flower, it is evident that the power in the flower to give this or that depends on the nature of their nerves, as well as on that of its own particles; and that we are as correct in saying it is a power in us to perceive, as in the object to impress. Every power, therefore, being characteristic of the nature of two bodies, is imperfectly and incompletely characteristic of either separately; but the primary qualities, being characteristic only of the body in which they are inherent, are the most important truths connected with it. For the question, what the thing *is*, must precede, and be of more importance than the question, what can it do.

§ 3. Colour is
a secondary
quality, there-
fore less im-
portant than
form.

Now, by Locke's definition above given, only bulk, figure, situation, and motion or rest of solid parts, are primary qualities. Hence all truths of colour sink at once into the second rank. He, therefore, who has neglected a truth of form for a truth of colour has neglected a greater truth for a less one.

And that colour is indeed a most unimportant characteristic of objects, will be farther evident on the slightest consideration. The colour of plants is constantly changing with the season, and of everything with the quality of light falling on it; but the nature and essence of the thing is independent of these changes. An oak is an oak, whether green with spring or red with winter; a dahlia is a dahlia, whether it be yellow or crimson, and if some monster-hunting botanist should ever frighten the flower blue with soap-suds, still it will be a dahlia; but let one curve of the petals—one groove of the stamens be wanting, and the flower ceases to be the

same. Let the roughness of the bark and the angles of the boughs be smoothed or diminished, and the oak ceases to be an oak; but let it retain its inward structure and outward form, and though its leaves grew white, or pink, or blue, or tricolor, it would be a white oak, or a pink oak, or a republican oak, but an oak still.

Again, colour is hardly ever even a *possible* distinction between two objects of the same species. Two trees, of the same kind, at the same season, and of the same age, are of absolutely the same colour; but they are not of the same form, nor anything like it. There can be no difference in the colour of two pieces of rock broken from the same place; but it is impossible they should be of the same form. So that form is not only the chief characteristic of species, but the only characteristic of individuals of a species.

Again, a colour, in association with other colours, is a totally different thing from the same colour seen by itself. It has a distinct and peculiar power upon the retina dependent on its association. Consequently, the colour of any object is not more dependent upon the nature of the object itself, and the eye beholding it, than on the colour of the objects near it; in this respect also, therefore, it is no characteristic.

And so great is the uncertainty with respect to those qualities or powers which depend as much on the nature of the object suffering as of the object acting, that it is totally impossible to prove that one man sees in the same thing the same colour that another does, though he may use the same name for it. One man may see yellow where another sees blue, but as the effect is constant, they agree in the term to be used for it, and both call it blue, or both yellow, having yet totally different ideas attached to the term. And yet neither can be said to see falsely, because the colour is not in the thing, but in the thing and them together. But if they see forms differently, one must see falsely, because the

§ 4. Colour no distinction between objects of the same species.

§ 5. And different in association from what it is alone.

§ 6. It is not certain whether any two people see the same colours in things.

form is positive in the object. My friend may see boars blue for anything I know, but it is impossible he should see them with paws instead of hoofs, unless his eyes or brain are diseased. (Compare Locke, Book ii. chap. xxxii. § 15.) But I do not speak of this uncertainty as capable of having any effect on art, because, though perhaps Landseer sees dogs of the colour which I should call blue, yet the colour he puts on the canvass, being in the same way blue to him, will still be brown or dog-colour to me; and so we may argue on points of colour just as if all men saw alike, as indeed in all probability they do, but I merely mention this uncertainty to show farther the vagueness and unimportance of colour as a characteristic of bodies.

§ 7. Form, considered as an element of landscape, includes light and shade.

Before going farther, however, I must explain the sense in which I have used the word "form," because painters have a most inaccurate and careless habit of confining this term to the *outline* of bodies, whereas it necessarily implies light and shade. It is true that the outline and the chiaroscuro must be separate subjects of investigation with the student; but no form whatsoever can be known to the eye in the slightest degree without its chiaroscuro, and, therefore, in speaking of form generally as an element of landscape, I mean that perfect and harmonious unity of outline with light and shade, by which all the parts and projections and proportions of a body are fully explained to the eye, being nevertheless perfectly independent of sight or power in other objects, the presence of light upon a body being a positive existence, whether we are aware of it or not, and in no degree dependent upon our senses. This being understood, the most convincing proof of the unimportance of colour lies in the accurate observation of the way in which any material object impresses itself on the mind. If we look at nature carefully, we shall find that her colours are in a state of perpetual confusion and indistinctness, while her forms, as told by

§ 8. Importance of light and shade in expressing the character of bodies, and unimportance of colour.

light and shade, are invariably clear, distinct, and speaking. The stones and gravel of the bank catch green reflections from the boughs above; the bushes receive greys and yellows from the ground; every hair's breadth of polished surface gives a little bit of the blue of the sky or the gold of the sun, like a star upon the local colour; this local colour, changeful and uncertain in itself, is again disguised and modified by the hue of the light, or quenched in the grey of the shadow, and the confusion and blending of tint is altogether so great, that were we left to find out what objects were by their colours only, we could scarcely in places distinguish the boughs of a tree from the air beyond them, or the ground beneath them. I know that people unpractised in art will not believe this at first, but if they have accurate powers of observation, they may soon ascertain it for themselves; they will find that while they can scarcely ever determine the *exact* hue of anything, except when it occurs in large masses, as in a green field or the blue sky, the form, as told by light and shade, is always decided and evident, and the source of the chief character of every object. Light and shade indeed so completely conquer the distinctions of local colour, that the difference in hue between the illumined parts of a white and a black object is not one-half so great as the difference (in sunshine) between the illumined and dark side of either separately.

We shall see hereafter, in considering ideas of beauty, § 9. Recapitulation. that colour, even as a source of pleasure, is mean and feeble compared to form; but this we cannot insist upon at present, we have only to do with simple truth, and the observations we have made are sufficient to prove that the artist who sacrifices or forgets a truth of form in the pursuit of a truth of colour, sacrifices what is definite to what is uncertain, and what is essential to what is accidental.

CHAPTER VI.

RECAPITULATION.

§ 1. The importance of historical truths.

IT ought further to be observed respecting truths in general, that those are always most valuable which are most historical, that is, which tell us most about the past and future states of the object to which they belong. In a tree, for instance, it is more important to give the appearance of energy and elasticity in the limbs which is indicative of growth and life, than any particular character of leaf, or texture of bough. It is more important that we should feel that the uppermost sprays are creeping higher and higher into the sky, and be impressed with the current of life and motion which is animating every fibre, than that we should know the exact pitch of relief with which those fibres are thrown out against the sky. For the first truths tell us tales about the tree, about what it has been, and will be, while the last are characteristic of it only in its present state, and are in no way talkative about themselves. Talkative facts are always more interesting and more important than silent ones. So again the lines in a crag which mark its stratification, and how it has been washed and rounded by water, or twisted and drawn out in fire, are more important, because they tell more, than the stains of the lichens which change year by year, and the accidental fissures of frost or decomposition, not but that both of these are historical, but historical in a less distinct manner, and for shorter periods.

Hence in general the truths of specific form are the first and most important of all, and next to them, those truths of chiaroscuro which are necessary to make us understand every quality and part of forms, and the relative distances of objects among each other, and in consequence their relative bulks. Altogether lower than these, as truths, though often most important as beauties, stand all effects of chiaroscuro which are productive merely of imitations of light and tone, and all effects of colour. To make us understand the *space* of the sky, is an end worthy of the artist's highest powers, to hit its particular blue or gold is an end to be thought of when we have accomplished the first, and not till then.

§ 2. Form, as explained by light and shade, the first of all truths. Tone, light, and colour, are secondary.

Finally, far below all these come those particular accuracies or tricks of chiaroscuro which cause objects to look projecting from the canvass, not worthy of the name of truths, because they require for their attainment the sacrifice of all others, for not having at our disposal the same intensity of light by which nature illustrates her objects, we are obliged, if we would have perfect deception in one, to destroy its relation to the rest. (Compare Sect. II. Chap. V.) And thus he who throws one object out of his picture, never lets the spectator into it. Michael Angelo bids you follow his phantoms into the abyss of heaven, but a modern French painter drops his hero out of the picture frame.

§ 3. And deceptive chiaroscuro the lowest of all.

This solidity or projection then, is the very lowest truth that art can give; it is the painting of mere matter, giving that as food for the eye which is properly only the subject of touch; it can neither instruct nor exalt, nor please, except as jugglery; it addresses no sense of beauty nor of power, and wherever it characterises the general aim of a picture, it is the sign and the evidence of the vilest and lowest mechanism which art can be insulted by giving name to.

CHAPTER VII.

GENERAL APPLICATION OF THE FOREGOING PRINCIPLES.

§ 1. The different selection of facts consequent on the aim at imitation or at truth.

WE have seen, in the preceding chapters, some proof of what was before asserted, that the truths necessary for deceptive imitation are not only few, but of the very lowest order. We thus find painters ranging themselves into two great classes, one aiming at the development of the exquisite truths of specific form, refined colour, and ætherial space, and content with the clear and impressive suggestion of any of these, by whatsoever means obtained, and the other casting all these aside, to attain those particular truths of tone and chiaroscuro, which may trick the spectator into a belief of reality. The first class, if they have to paint a tree, are intent upon giving the exquisite designs of intersecting undulation in its boughs, the grace of its leafage, the intricacy of its organization, and all those qualities which make it lovely or affecting of its kind. The second endeavour only to make you believe that you are looking at wood. They are totally regardless of truths or beauties of form; a stump is as good as a trunk for all their purposes, so that they can only deceive the eye into the supposition that it is a stump and not canvass.

§ 2. The old masters, as a body, aim only at imitation.

To which of these classes the great body of the old landscape painters belonged, may be partly gathered from the kind of praise which is bestowed upon them by those who admire them most, which either refers to technical matters, dexterity of touch, clever oppositions

of colour, &c., or is bestowed on the power of the painter to *deceive*. M. de Marmontel, going into a connoisseur's gallery, pretends to mistake a fine Berghem for a window. This, he says, was affirmed by its possessor to be the greatest praise the picture had ever received. Such is indeed the notion of art which is at the bottom of the veneration usually felt for the old landscape painters; it is of course the palpable, first idea of ignorance; it is the only notion which people unacquainted with art can by any possibility have of its ends, the only test by which people unacquainted with nature, can pretend to form anything like judgment of art. "We have no eye for colour—we perceive no intention in composition—we do not know anything about form—we cannot estimate excellence—we do not care for beauty, but—we know whether it deceives." It is a strange thing that, with the great historical painters of Italy before them, who had broken so boldly and indignantly from the trammels of this notion, and shaken the very dust of it from their feet, the succeeding landscape painters should have wasted their lives in jugglery: but so it is, and so it will be felt, the more we look into their works, that the deception of the senses was the great and first end of all their art. To attain this they paid deep and serious attention to effects of light and tone, and to the exact degree of relief which material objects take against light and atmosphere; and sacrificing every other truth to these, not necessarily, but because they required no others for deception, they succeeded in rendering these particular facts with a fidelity and force which, in the pictures that have come down to us uninjured, are as yet unequalled, and never can be surpassed. They painted their foregrounds with laborious industry, covering them with details so as to render them deceptive to the ordinary eye, regardless of beauty or truth in the details themselves; they painted their trees with care-

§ 3. What truths they gave.

ful attention to their pitch of shade against the sky, utterly regardless of all that is beautiful or essential in the anatomy of their foliage and boughs: they painted their distances with exquisite use of transparent colour and ærial tone, totally neglectful of all facts and forms which nature uses such colour and tone to relieve and adorn. They had neither love of nature, nor feeling of her beauty; they looked for her coldest and most common-place effects, because they were easiest to imitate, and for her most vulgar forms, because they were most easily to be recognised by the untaught eyes of those whom alone they could hope to please; they did it, like the Pharisee of old, to be seen of men, and they had their reward. They do deceive and delight the unpractised eye;—they will to all ages, as long as their colours endure, be the standards of excellence with all, who, ignorant of nature, claim to be thought learned in art. And they will to all ages be, to those who have thorough love and knowledge of the creation which they libel, instructive proofs of the limited number and low character of the truths which are necessary, and the accumulated multitude of pure, broad, bold falsehoods which are admissible, in pictures meant only to deceive.

There is of course more or less accuracy of knowledge and execution combined with this aim at effect, according to the industry and precision of eye possessed by the master, and more or less of beauty in the forms selected, according to his natural taste; but both the beauty and truth are sacrificed unhesitatingly where they interfere with the great effort at deception. Claude had, if it had been cultivated, a fine feeling for beauty of form, and is seldom ungraceful in his foliage; but his picture, when examined with reference to essential truth, is one mass of error from beginning to end. Cuyp, on the other hand, could paint close truth of everything, except ground and water, with decision and

success, but then he has not the slightest idea of the meaning of the word "beautiful." Gaspar Poussin, more ignorant of truth than Claude, and almost as dead to beauty as Cuyp, has yet a perception of the feeling and moral truth of nature which often redeems the picture; but yet in all of them, everything that they can do is done for deception, and nothing for the sake or love of what they are painting.

Modern landscape painters have looked at nature with totally different eyes, seeking not for what is easiest to imitate, but for what is most important to tell. Rejecting at once all idea of *bonâ fide* imitation, they think only of conveying the impression of nature into the mind of the spectator, and chiefly of forcing upon his feelings those delicate and refined truths of specific form, which are just what the careless eye can least detect or enjoy, because they are intended by the Deity to be the constant objects of our investigation, that they may be the constant sources of our pleasure. And there is in consequence, a greater sum of valuable, essential, and impressive truth in the works of two or three of our leading modern landscape painters, than in those of all the old masters put together, and of truth too, nearly unmixed with definite or avoidable falsehood; while the unimportant and feeble truths of the old masters are choked with a mass of perpetual defiance of the most authoritative laws of nature.

I do not expect this assertion to be believed at present, it must rest for demonstration on the examination we are about to enter upon; yet, even without reference to any intricate or deep-laid truths, it appears strange to me, that any one familiar with nature, and fond of her, should not grow weary and sick at heart among the melancholy and monotonous transcripts of her which alone can be received from the old school of art. A man accustomed to the broad, wild sea-shore, with its bright breakers, and free winds, and sounding

§ 4. The principles of selection adopted by modern artists.

§ 5. General feeling of Claude, Salvator, and G. Poussin, contrasted with the freedom and vastness of nature.

rocks, and eternal sensation of tameless power, can scarcely but be angered when Claude bids him stand still on some paltry, chipped and chiselled quay, with porters and wheelbarrows running against him, to watch a weak, rippling, bound and barriered water, that has not strength enough in one of its waves to upset the flower-pots on the wall, or even to fling one jet of spray over the confining stone. A man accustomed to the strength and glory of God's mountains, with their soaring and radiant pinnacles, and surging sweeps of measureless distance, kingdoms in their valleys, and climates upon their crests, can scarcely but be angered when Salvator bids him stand still under some contemptible fragment of splintery crag, which an Alpine snow-wreath would smother in its first swell, with a stunted bush or two growing out of it, and a Dudley or Halifax-like volume of manufactory smoke for a sky. A man accustomed to the grace and infinity of nature's foliage, with every vista a cathedral, and every bough a revelation, can scarcely but be angered when Poussin mocks him with a black round mass of impenetrable paint, diverging into feathers instead of leaves, and supported on a stick instead of a trunk. Who, that has one spark of feeling for what is beautiful or true, would not turn to be refreshed by the pure and extended realizations of modern art ! How many have we—how various in their aim and sphere—embracing one by one every feeling and lesson of the creation ! David Cox, whose pencil never falls but in dew—simple-minded as a child, gentle, and loving all things that are pure and lowly—content to lie quiet among the rustling leaves, and sparkling grass, and purple-cushioned heather, only to watch the soft white clouds melting with their own motion, and the dewy blue dropping through them like rain, so that he may but cast from him as pollution all that is proud, and artificial, and unquiet, and worldly, and possess his spirit in humility

§ 6. And with
the feeling of
modern artists.

and peace. Copley Fielding, casting his whole soul into space—exulting like a wild deer in the motion of the swift mists, and the free far surfaces of the untrodden hills—now wandering with the quick, pale, fitful sun-gleams over the dim swells and sweeps of grey downs and shadowy dingles, until, lost half in light and half in vapour, they melt into the blue of the plain as the cloud does into the sky—now climbing with the purple sunset along the aerial slopes of the quiet mountains, only known from the red clouds by their stillness—now flying with the wild wind and sifted spray along the white, driving, desolate sea; but always with the passion for nature's freedom burning in his heart, so that every leaf in his foreground is a wild one, and every line of his hills is limitless. J. D. Harding, brilliant and vigorous, and clear in light, as nature's own sunshine—deep in knowledge—exquisite in feeling of every form that nature falls into—following with his quick, keen dash the sunlight into the crannies of the rocks, and the wind into the tangling of the grass, and the bright colour into the fall of the sea foam—various, universal in his aim—master alike of all form and feature of crag, or torrent, or forest, or cloud; but English, all English at his heart, returning still to rest under the shade of some spreading elm, where the fallow deer butt among the bending fern, and the quiet river glides noiselessly by its reedy shore, and the yellow corn sheaves glow along the flanks of the sloping hills. Clarkson Stanfield, firm, and fearless, and unerring in his knowledge—stern and decisive in his truth—perfect and certain in composition—shunning nothing, concealing nothing, and falsifying nothing—never affected, never morbid, never failing—conscious of his strength, but never ostentatious of it—acquainted with every line and hue of the *deep* sea—chiselling his waves with unhesitating knowledge of every curve of their anatomy, and every moment of their motion—building his mountains rock by rock,

with wind in every fissure, and weight in every stone—and modelling the masses of his sky with the strength of tempest in their every fold. And Turner—glorious in conception—unfathomable in knowledge—solitary in power—with the elements waiting upon his will, and the night and the morning obedient to his call, sent as a prophet of God to reveal to men the mysteries of His universe, standing, like the great angel of the Apocalypse, clothed with a cloud, and with a rainbow upon his head, and with the sun and stars given into his hand.

§ 7. The character of Venice, as given by Canaletti.

But I must not anticipate my subject—what I have asserted must be proved by deliberate investigation of facts, and in no way left dependent upon feeling or imagination. Yet I may perhaps, before proceeding into detail, illustrate my meaning more completely by a comparison of the kind of truths impressed upon us in the painting of Venice, by Canaletti, Prout, Stanfield, and Turner.

The effect of a fine Canaletti is, in its first impression, dioramic. We fancy we are in our beloved Venice again, with one foot by mistake in the clear, invisible film of water lapping over the marble steps of the foreground. Every house has its proper relief against the sky—every brick and stone its proper hue of sunlight and shade—and every degree of distance its proper tone of retiring air. Presently, however, we begin to feel that it is lurid and gloomy, and that the painter, compelled by the lowness of the utmost light at his disposal to deepen the shadows, in order to get the right relation, has lost the flashing, dazzling, exulting light which was one of our chief sources of Venetian happiness. But we pardon this, knowing it to be unavoidable, and begin to look for something of that in which Venice differs from Rotterdam, or any other city built beside canals. We know that house, certainly; we never passed it without stopping our gondolier, for its arabesques were as rich

as a bank of flowers in spring, and as beautiful as a dream. What has Canaletti given us for them? Five black dots. Well: take the next house. We remember that too; it was mouldering inch by inch into the canal, and the bricks had fallen away from its shattered marble shafts, and left them white and skeleton-like, yet with their fretwork of cold flowers wreathed about them still, untouched by time; and through the rents of the wall behind them there used to come long sunbeams, greened by the weeds through which they pierced, which flitted and fell one by one round those grey and quiet shafts, catching here a leaf and there a leaf, and gliding over the illumined edges and delicate fissures until they sank into the deep dark hollow between the marble blocks of the sunk foundation, lighting every other moment one isolated emerald lamp on the crest of the intermittent waves, when the wild sea-weeds and crimson lichens drifted and crawled with their thousand colours and fine branches over its decay, and the black, clogging, accumulated limpets hung in ropy clusters from the dripping and tinkling stone. What has Canaletti given us for this? One square red mass, composed of—let me count—five and fifty—no; six and fifty—no; I was right at first—five and fifty bricks, of precisely the same size, shape, and colour, one great black line for the shadow of the roof at the top, and six similar ripples in a row at the bottom! And this is what people call “painting nature!” It is indeed painting nature—as she appears to the most unfeeling and untaught of mankind. The bargeman and the brick-layer probably see no more in Venice than Canaletti gives—heaps of earth and mortar, with water between; and are just as capable of appreciating the facts of sunlight and shadow, by which he deceives us, as the most educated of us all. But what more there is in Venice than brick and stone—what there is of mystery and death, and memory and beauty—what there is to be

learned or lamented, to be loved or wept—we look for to Canaletti in vain.

§ 8. By Prout. Let us pass to Prout. The imitation is lost at once. The buildings have nothing resembling their real relief against the sky; there are multitudes of false distances; the shadows in many places have a great deal more Vandyke-brown than darkness in them; and the lights very often more yellow-ochre than sunshine. But yet the effect on our eye is that very brilliancy and cheerfulness which delighted us in Venice itself, and there is none of that oppressive and lurid gloom which was cast upon our feelings by Canaletti.* And now we feel that there is something in the subject worth drawing, and different from other subjects and architecture. That house is rich, and strange, and full of grotesque carving and character—that one next to it is shattered and infirm, and varied with picturesque rents and hues of decay—that, farther off is beautiful in proportion, and strong in its purity of marble. Now we begin to feel that we are in Venice; this is what we could not get elsewhere; it is worth seeing, and drawing, and talking, and thinking of,—not an exhibition of common

* It will be observed how completely I cast aside all mere *mechanical* excellence as unworthy of praise. Canaletti's *mechanism* is wonderful. Prout's the rudest possible; but there is not a grain of feeling in the one, and there is much in the other. In spite of all that can be alleged of the mannerism and imperfection of Prout as an artist, there is that in his drawings which will bring us back to them again and again, even after we have been rendered most fastidious by the exquisite drawing and perfect composition of the accomplished Roberts. There is an appreciation and realization of continental character in his works—a locality and life which have never yet been reached by any other of our architectural draughtsmen—and they are the sign of deep feeling and high genius, by whatever faults of manner they may be attained or accompanied, and we shall think ourselves in danger of losing our right feeling for art, and for nature too, when we find ourselves unable to turn occasionally from the refined grace of Roberts, and the absolute truth of Stanfield, to linger with Prout on the sunny side of a Flemish street, watching the fantastic peaks of its gables in the sky, and listening for the clatter of the sabot.

daylight or brick walls. But let us look a little closer; we know those capitals very well; their design was most original and perfect, and so delicate that it seemed to have been cut in ivory;—what have we got for them here? Five straight strokes of a reed pen! No, Mr. Prout, it is not quite Venice yet.

Let us take Stanfield then. Now we are farther § 9. By Stan-
still from anything like Venetian tone; all is cold and field.
comfortless, but there is air and good daylight, and we will not complain. And now let us look into the buildings, and all is perfection and fidelity; every shade and line full of feeling and truth, rich and solid, and substantial stone; every leaf and arabesque marked to its minutest curve and angle,—the marble crumbling, the wood mouldering, and the waves splashing and lapping before our eyes. But it is all drawn hard and sharp, there is nothing to hope for or find out, nothing to dream of or discover; we can measure and see it from base to battlement, there is nothing too fine for us to follow, nothing too full for us to fathom. This cannot be nature, for it is not infinity. No, Mr. Stanfield, it is scarcely Venice yet.

But let us take with Turner, the last and greatest § 10. By
step of all. Thank heaven, we are in sunshine again,—Turner.
and what sunshine! Not the lurid, gloomy, plague-like oppression of Canaletti, but white, flashing fulness of dazzling light, which the waves drink and the clouds breathe, bounding and burning in intensity of joy. That sky—it is a very visible infinity—liquid, measureless, unfathomable, panting and melting through the chasms in the long fields of snow-white, flaked; slow-moving vapour, that guide the eye along their multitudinous waves down to the islanded rest of the Euganean hills. Do we dream, or does the white forked sail drift nearer, and nearer yet, diminishing the blue sea between us with the fulness of its wings? It pauses now; but the quivering of its bright reflection troubles the

shadows of the sea, those azure, fathomless depths of crystal mystery, on which the swiftness of the poised gondola floats double, its black beak lifted like the crest of a dark ocean bird, its scarlet draperies flashed back from the kindling surface, and its bent oar breaking the radiant water into a dust of gold. Dream-like and dim, but glorious, the unnumbered palaces lift their shafts out of the hollow sea—pale ranks of motionless flame—their mighty towers sent up to heaven like tongues of more eager fire,—their grey domes looming vast and dark, like eclipsed worlds,—their sculptured arabesques and purple marble fading farther and fainter, league beyond league, lost in the light of distance. Detail after detail, thought beyond thought, you find and feel them through the radiant mystery, inexhaustible as indistinct, beautiful, but never all revealed; secret in fullness, confused in symmetry, as nature herself is to the bewildered and foiled glance, giving out of that indistinctness, and through that confusion, the perpetual newness of the infinite and the beautiful.

Yes, Mr. Turner, we are in Venice now.

§ 11. The system to be observed in comparing works with reference to truth.

I think the above example may at least illustrate my meaning, and render clear the distinction which I wish the reader always to keep in mind, between those truths which are selected as a means of deception, and those which are selected for their own sake. How few of the latter are usually given by the old masters, I shall proceed to show; but in so doing, I shall not take particular instances of local character like the above, but shall confine myself to those general truths of nature which are common to all countries and times, and which are independent of local or national character, partly because the works of the old masters are for the most part intended not to be particular portraiture, but ideal or general nature; and partly because the representation of the local character of scenery will more properly be considered under the head of ideas of relation, as it

necessarily bears the same relation to ideal landscape which the representation of individual character does to that of the ideal human form, animated by its perfect and generic mind. At present, therefore, I leave out of the question all consideration of peculiar and local character, though in doing so, I omit one of the chief and most essential qualities of truth in at least one-half of the works of our greatest modern master, and I am content to take that which is universal in the moderns, and compare it with that which is supposed to be universal in the ancients. And when we have investigated the nature and desirableness of ideas of relation, we will take up those parts of the works of both schools which are local, and observe how the knowledge of specific character is used to awaken and direct the current of particular thought. In the execution of our immediate task, we shall be compelled to notice only a few of the most striking and demonstrable facts of nature. To trace out the actual sum of truth or falsehood in any one work, touch by touch, would require an essay on every department of physical science, and then a chapter to every inch of canvass. All that can be done is to take the broad principles and laws of nature, and show in one or two conspicuous instances where they have been observed, and where violated, and so to leave the reader to find out for himself how the observation and violation have been continued in every part, and down to the most delicate touches. I can do little more than suggest the right train of thought and mode of observation ; to carry it fully out must be left to the feeling and the industry of the observer.

And as some apology for the most inadequate execution, even of what I have attempted, it should be considered how difficult it is to express or explain, by language only, those delicate qualities of the object of sense, on the seizing of which all refined truth of representation depends. Try, for instance, to explain in

§ 12. Difficulty of demonstration in such subjects.

language, the exact qualities of the lines on which depend the whole truth and beauty of expression about the half-opened lips of Raffaele's St Catherine. There is indeed nothing in landscape so ineffable as this; but there is no part nor portion of God's works in which the delicacy appreciable by a cultivated eye, and necessary to be rendered in art, is not beyond all expression and explanation; I cannot tell it you, if you do not see it. And thus I have been entirely unable, in the following pages, to demonstrate clearly anything of really deep and perfect truth; nothing but what is coarse and common-place, in matters to be judged of by the senses, is within the reach of argument. How much or how little I have done must be judged of by the reader: how much it is impossible to do I have more fully shown in the concluding section.

It would be needless, after having explained a given truth, to repeat the same phrases, "observe it here," or "trace it there," with respect to all the works in which it may happen to occur. I shall illustrate each truth from the works of the artist by whom I find it most completely and constantly given; commonly, therefore, from those of the father of modern art, J. M. W. Turner, and I shall then name the other artists in whom its faithful rendering is also deserving of praise.

§ 13. General
plan of investi-
gation.

I shall first take into consideration those general truths, common to all the objects of nature, which are productive of what is usually called "effect," that is to say, truths of tone, general colour, space, and light. I shall then investigate the truths of specific form and colour, in the four great component parts of landscape—sky, earth, water, and vegetation. Architecture will be slightly noticed in the concluding section of the present part; more fully in following parts of the work.

SECTION II.

OF GENERAL TRUTHS.

CHAPTER I.

OF TRUTH OF TONE.

As I have already allowed, that in effects of tone, the old masters have never yet been equalled; and as this is the first, and nearly the last, concession I shall have to make to them, I wish it at once to be thoroughly understood how far it extends.

§ 1. Meanings of the word "tone:"—
First, the right relation of objects in shadow to the principal light.

I understand two things by the word "tone:"—first, the exact relief and relation of objects against and to each other in substance and darkness, as they are nearer or more distant, and the perfect relation of the shades of all of them to the chief light of the picture, whether that be sky, water, or anything else. Secondly, the exact relation of the colours of the shadows to the colours of the lights, so that they may be at once felt to be merely different degrees of the same light; and the accurate relation among the illuminated parts themselves, with respect to the degree in which they are influenced by the colour of the light itself, whether warm or cold, so that the whole of the picture (or, where several tones are united, those parts of it which are under each) may be felt to be in one climate, under one kind of light, and in one kind of atmosphere; this being chiefly dependent

§ 2. Secondly, the quality of colour by which it is felt to owe part of its brightness to the hue of light upon it.

on that peculiar and inexplicable quality of each colour laid on, which makes the eye feel both what is the actual colour of the object represented, and that it is raised to its apparent pitch by illumination. A very bright brown, for instance, out of sunshine, may be precisely of the same shade of colour as a very dead or cold brown in sunshine, but it will be totally different in *quality*; and that quality by which the illuminated dead colour would be felt in nature different from the unilluminated bright one, is what artists are perpetually aiming at, and connoisseurs talking nonsense about, under the name of "tone." The want of tone in pictures is caused by objects looking bright in their own positive hue, and not by illumination, and by the consequent want of sensation of the raising of their hues by light.

§ 3. Difference between tone in its first sense and aerial perspective.

The first of these meanings of the word "tone" is liable to be confounded with what is commonly called "aërial perspective." But aërial perspective is the expression of space, by any means whatsoever, sharpness of edge, vividness of colour, &c., assisted by greater pitch of shadow, and requires only that objects should be detached from each other, by degrees of intensity in *proportion* to their distance, without requiring that the difference between the farthest and nearest should be in positive quantity the same that nature has put. But what I have called "tone" requires that there should be the same sum of difference, as well as the same division of differences.

§ 4. The pictures of the old masters perfect in relation of middle tints to light.

Now the finely-toned pictures of the old masters are, in this respect, some of the notes of nature played two or three octaves below her key, the dark objects in the middle distance having precisely the same relation to the light of the sky which they have in nature, but the light being necessarily infinitely lowered, and the mass of the shadow deepened in the same degree. I have often been struck, when looking at a camera-obscura on a dark day, with the exact resemblance the image bore

to one of the ~~fin~~^{first} pictures of the old masters, all the foliage coming dark against the sky, and nothing being seen in its mass but here and there the isolated light of a silvery stem or an unusually illumined cluster of leafage.

Now if this could be done consistently, and all the notes of nature given in this way an octave or two down, it would be right and necessary so to do: but be it observed, not only does nature surpass us in power of obtaining light as much as the sun surpasses white paper, but she also infinitely surpasses us in her power of shade. Her deepest shades are void spaces from which no light whatever is reflected to the eye; ours are black surfaces from which, paint as black as we may, a great deal of light is still reflected, and which, placed against one of nature's deep bits of gloom, would tell as distinct light. Here we are then, with white paper for our highest light, and visible illumined surface for our deepest shadow, set to run the gauntlet against nature, with the sun for her light, and vacuity for her gloom. It is evident that *she* can well afford to throw her material objects dark against the brilliant aerial tone of her sky, and yet give in those objects themselves a thousand intermediate distances and tones before she comes to black, or to anything like it—all the illumined surfaces of her objects being as distinctly and vividly brighter than her nearest and darkest shadows, as the sky is brighter than those illumined surfaces. But if we, against our poor, dull obscurity of yellow paint, instead of sky, insist on having the same relation of shade in material objects, we go down to the bottom of our scale at once; and what in the world are we to do then? Where are all our intermediate distances to come from?—how are we to express the aerial relations among the parts themselves, for instance, of foliage, whose most distant boughs are already almost black?—how are we to come up from this to the foreground,

§ 5. And consequently totally false in relation of middle tints to darkness.

and when we have done so, how are we to express the distinction between its solid parts, already as dark as we can make them, and its vacant hollows, which nature has marked sharp and clear and black, among its lighted surfaces? It cannot but be evident at a glance, that if to any one of the steps from one distance to another, we give the same quantity of difference in pitch of shade which nature does, we must pay for this expenditure of our means by totally missing half a dozen distances, not a whit less important or marked, and so sacrifice a multitude of truths, to obtain one. And this accordingly was the means by which the old masters obtained their (truth?) of tone. They chose those steps of distance which are the most conspicuous and noticeable, that for instance from sky to foliage, or from clouds to hills, and they gave these their precise pitch of difference in shade with exquisite accuracy of imitation. Their means were then exhausted, and they were obliged to leave their trees flat masses of mere filled-up outline, and to omit the truths of space in every individual part of their picture by the thousand. But this they did not care for; it saved them trouble; they reached their grand end, imitative effect; they thrust home just at the places where the common and careless eye looks for imitation, and they attained the broadest and most faithful appearance of truth of tone which art can exhibit.

§ 6. General
falsehood of
such a system.

But they are prodigals, and foolish prodigals, in art; they lavish their whole means to get one truth, and leave themselves powerless when they should seize a thousand. And is it indeed worthy of being called a truth, when we have a vast history given us to relate, to the fulness of which neither our limits nor our language are adequate, instead of giving all its parts abridged in the order of their importance, to omit or deny the greater part of them, that we may dwell with verbal fidelity on two or three? Nay, the very truth

to which the rest are sacrificed is rendered falsehood by their absence, the relation of the tree to the sky is marked as an impossibility by the want of relation of its parts to each other.

Turner starts from the beginning with a totally different principle. He boldly takes pure white, (and justly, for it is the sign of the most intense sunbeams) for his highest light, and lamp-black for his deepest shade, and between these he makes every degree of shade indicative of a separate degree of distance,* giving each step of approach, not the exact difference in pitch which it would have in nature, but a difference bearing the same proportion to that, which his sum of possible shade bears to the sum of nature's shade, so that an object half way between his horizon and his foreground, will be exactly in half tint of force, and every minute division of intermediate space will have just its proportionate share of the lesser sum, and no more. Hence where the old masters expressed one distance, he expresses a hundred, and where they said furlongs, he says leagues. Which of these modes of procedure be most agreeable with truth, I think I may safely leave the reader to decide for himself. He will see in this very first instance, one proof of what we above asserted, that the deceptive imitation of nature is inconsistent with real truth, for the very means by which the old masters attained the apparent accuracy of tone which is so satisfying to the eye, compelled them to give up all idea of real relations of retirement, and to represent a few successive and marked stages of distance, like the scenes of a theatre, instead of the imperceptible, multitudinous, symmetrical re-

§ 7. The principle of Turner in this respect.

* Of course I am not speaking here of treatment of chiaroscuro, but of that quantity of depth of shade by which, *ceteris paribus*, a near object will exceed a distant one. For the truth of the systems of Turner and the old masters, as regards chiaroscuro, vide Chapter III. of this Section, § 8.

tirement of nature, who is not more careful to separate her nearest bush from her farthest one, than to separate the nearest bough of that bush from the one next to it.

§ 8. Comparison of N. Poussin's "Phocion."

Take, for instance, one of the finest landscapes that ancient art has produced—the work of a really great and intellectual mind, the quiet Nicholas Poussin, in our own National Gallery, with the traveller washing his feet. The first idea we receive from this picture is that it is evening, and all the light coming from the horizon. Not so. It is full noon, the light coming steep from the left, as is shown by the shadow of the stick on the right hand pedestal, (for if the sun were not very high, that shadow could not lose itself half way down, and if it were not lateral, the shadow would slope, instead of being vertical.) Now, ask yourself, and answer candidly, if those black masses of foliage, in which scarcely any form is seen but the outline, be a true representation of trees under noon-day sunlight, sloping from the left, bringing out, as it necessarily would do, their masses into golden green, and marking every leaf and bough with sharp shadow and sparkling light. The only truth in the picture is the exact pitch of relief against the sky of both trees and hills, and to this the organization of the hills, the intricacy of the foliage, and everything indicative either of the nature of the light, or the character of the objects, is unhesitatingly sacrificed. So much falsehood does it cost to obtain two apparent truths of tone. Or take, as a still more glaring instance, No. 260 in the Dulwich Gallery, where the trunks of the trees, even of those farthest off, on the left, are as black as paint can make them, and there is not, and cannot be, the slightest increase of force, or any marking whatsoever of distance by colour, or any other means, between them and the foreground.

Compare with these, Turner's treatment of his materials in the "Mercury and Argus." He has here his light actually coming from the distance, the sun being nearly in the centre of the picture, and a violent relief of objects against it would be far more justifiable than in Poussin's case. But this dark relief is used in its full force only with the nearest *leaves* of the nearest group of foliage overhanging the foreground from the left, and between these and the more distant members of the same group, though only three or four yards separate, distinct aërial perspective and intervening mist and light are shown, while the large tree in the centre, though very dark, as being very near, compared with all the distance, is much diminished in intensity of shade from this nearest group of leaves, and is faint compared with all the foreground. It is true that this tree has not, in consequence, the actual pitch of shade against the sky which it would have in nature, but it has precisely as much as it possibly can have, to leave it the same proportionate relation to the objects near at hand. And it cannot but be evident to the thoughtful reader, that whatever trickery or deception may be the result of a contrary mode of treatment, this is the only scientific or essentially truthful system, and that what it loses in tone it gains in aërial perspective.

Compare again the last vignette in Rogers' Poems, the "Datur Hora Quietì," where everything, even the darkest parts of the trees, is kept pale and full of graduation; even the bridge, where it crosses the descending stream of sunshine, rather lost in the light than relieved against it, until we come up to the foreground, and then the vigorous local black of the plough throws the whole picture into distance and sunshine. I do not know anything in art which can for a moment be set beside this drawing for united intensity of light and repose.

Observe, I am not at present speaking of the beauty or desirableness of the system of the old masters; it may

§ 9. With
Turner's "Mer-
cury and
Argus."

§ 10. And with
the "Datur
Hora Quietì."

be sublime, and affecting, and ideal, and intellectual, and a great deal more ; but all I am concerned with at present is, that it is not *true* ; while Turner's is the closest and most studied approach to truth of which the materials of art admit.

§ 11. The second sense of the word "tone."

It was not therefore, with reference to this division of the subject that I admitted inferiority in our great modern master to Claude or Poussin ; but with reference to the second and more usual meaning of the word "tone"—the exact relation and fitness of shadow and light, and of the hues of all objects under them ; and more especially that precious quality of each colour laid on, which makes it appear a quiet colour illuminated, not a bright colour in shade. But I allow this inferiority only with respect to the paintings of Turner, not to his drawings. I could select from among the works named in Chap. VI. of this section, pieces of tone absolutely faultless and perfect, from the coolest greys of wintry dawn to the intense fire of summer noon. The Cowes, Devonport with the dockyards, Colchester, Oakhampton, Folkestone, Cologne, Kenilworth, Durham, and Dudley, might be instanced as cases of every effect of the most refined and precious tone, which we might fearlessly, if not triumphantly, compare with the very finest works of the old masters. And the difference between the prevailing character of these, and that of nearly all the paintings (for the early oil pictures of Turner are far less perfect in tone than the most recent), it is difficult to account for, but on the supposition that there is something in the material which modern artists in general are incapable of mastering, and which compels Turner himself to think less of tone in oil colour than of other and more important qualities. The total failures of Callcott, whose struggles after tone end so invariably in shivering winter or brown paint, the misfortune of Landseer, with his evening sky in last year's exhibition, the frigidity of Stanfield, and the

§ 12. Remarkable difference in this respect between the paintings and drawings of Turner.

earthiness and opacity which all the magnificent power and admirable science of Etty are unable entirely to conquer, are too fatal and convincing proofs of the want of knowledge of means, rather than of the absence of aim, in modern artists as a body. Yet, with respect to Turner, however much the want of tone in his early paintings (the "Fall of Carthage," for instance, and others painted at a time when he was producing the most exquisite hues of light in watercolour) might seem to favour such a supposition, there are passages in his recent works (such, for instance, as the sunlight along the sea, in the "Slaver") which directly contradict it, and which prove to us that where he now errs in tone (as in the "Cicero's Villa"), it can be owing to no want of power to reach it, but is to be attributed only to the pursuit of some different and nobler end. I shall therefore glance at the particular modes in which Turner manages his tone in his present Academy pictures; the early ones must be given up at once. Place a genuine untouched Claude beside the "Crossing the Brook," and the difference in value and tenderness of tone will be felt in an instant, and felt the more painfully because all the cool and transparent qualities of Claude would have been here desirable, and in their place, and appear to have been aimed. The foreground of the "Building of Carthage," and the greater part of the architecture of the "Fall," are equally heavy and evidently paint, if we compare them with genuine passages of Claude's sunshine. There is a very grand and simple piece of tone in the possession of J. Allnutt, Esq., a sunset behind willows, but even this is wanting in refinement of shadow, and is crude in its extreme distance. Not so with the recent Academy pictures, many of their passages are absolutely faultless; all are refined and marvellous, and with the exception of the "Cicero's Villa," we shall not find a single picture painted within the last ten years, which does

§ 13. Not
owing to want
of power over
the material.

§ 14. The two distinct qualities of light to be considered.

not either present us with perfect tone, or with some higher beauty, to which it is necessarily sacrificed. If we glance at the requirements of nature, and her superiority of means to ours, we shall see why and how it is sacrificed. Light, with reference to the tone it induces on objects, is either to be considered as neutral and white, bringing out local colours with fidelity; or coloured, and consequently modifying these local tints with its own. But the power of pure white light to exhibit local colour is strangely variable. The morning light of about nine or ten, is usually very pure, but the difference of its effect on different days, independently of mere brilliancy, is as inconceivable as inexplicable. Every one knows how capriciously the colours of a fine opal vary from day to day, and how rare the lights are which bring them fully out. Now the expression of the strange, penetrating, deep, neutral light, which while it *alters* no colour, brings every colour up to the highest possible pitch and key of pure, harmonious intensity, is the chief attribute of finely toned pictures by the great *colourists*, as opposed to pictures of equally high tone, by masters who, careless of colour, are content, like Cuypp, to lose local tints in the golden blaze of absorbing light.

§ 15. Falsehoods by which Titian attains the appearance of quality in light.

Falsehood, in this neutral tone, if it may be so called, is a matter far more of feeling than of proof, for any colour is *possible* under such lights; it is meagreness and feebleness only which are to be avoided; and these are rather matters of sensation than of reasoning. But it is yet easy enough to prove by what exaggerated and false means the pictures most celebrated for this quality are endowed with their richness and solemnity of colour. In the "Bacchus and Ariadne" of Titian it is difficult to imagine anything more magnificently impossible than the blue of the distant landscape;—impossible, not from its vividness, but because it is not faint and aerial enough to account for its purity of colour; it is too dark and

blue at the same time; and there is indeed so total a want of atmosphere in it, that but for the difference of form, it would be impossible to tell the mountains (intended to be ten miles off) from the robe of Ariadne close to the spectator. Yet make this blue faint, ærial, and distant—make it in the slightest degree to resemble the truth of Nature's colour—and all the tone of the picture, all its intensity and splendour, will vanish on the instant. So again, in the exquisite and inimitable little bit of colour, the “Europa” in the Dulwich Gallery, the blue of the dark promontory on the left is thoroughly absurd and impossible, and the warm tones of the clouds equally so, unless it were sunset; but the blue especially, because it is nearer than several points of land which are equally in shadow, and yet are rendered in warm grey. But the whole value and tone of the picture would be destroyed if this blue were altered.

Now, as much of this kind of richness of tone is always given by Turner as is compatible with truth of ærial effect; but he will not sacrifice the higher truths of his landscape to mere pitch of colour, as Titian does. He infinitely prefers having the power of giving extension of space, and fulness of form, to that of giving deep melodies of tone; he feels too much the incapacity of art, with its feeble means of light, to give the abundance of Nature's gradations; and therefore it is, that taking pure white for his highest expression of light, that even pure yellow may give him one more step in the scale of shade, he becomes necessarily inferior in richness of effect to the old masters of tone (who always used a golden highest light), but gains by the sacrifice a thousand more essential truths. For, though we all know how

§ 16. Turner will not use such means.

much more like light, in the abstract, a finely-toned warm hue will be to the feelings than white, yet it is utterly impossible to mark the same number of gradations between such a sobered high light and the deepest shadow, which we can between this and white; and as

§ 17. But gains in essential truth by the sacrifice.

these gradations are absolutely necessary to give the facts of form and distance, which, as we have above shown, are more important than any truths of tone, Turner sacrifices the richness of his picture to its completeness—the manner of the statement to its matter. And not only is he right in doing this, for the sake of space, but he is right also in the abstract question of colour; for as we observed above (Sect. 14), it is only the white light—the perfect unmodified group of rays—which will bring out local colour perfectly; and if the picture, therefore, is to be complete in its system of colour, that is, if it is to have each of the three primitives in their purity, it *must* have white for its highest light, otherwise the purity of one of them at least will be impossible. And this leads us to notice the second and more frequent quality of light (which is assumed if we make our highest representation of it yellow), the positive hue, namely, which it may itself possess, of course modifying whatever local tints it exhibits, and thereby rendering certain colours necessary, and certain colours impossible. Under the direct yellow light of a descending sun, for instance, pure white and pure blue are both impossible, because the purest whites and blues that nature could produce would be turned in some degree into gold or green by it, and when the sun is within half a degree of the horizon, if the sky be clear, a rose light supersedes the golden one, still more overwhelming in its effect on local colour. I have seen the pale fresh green of spring vegetation in the gardens of Venice, on the Lido side, turned pure russet, or between that and crimson, by a vivid sunset of this kind, every particle of green colour being absolutely annihilated. And so under all coloured lights, (and there are few, from dawn to twilight, which are not slightly tinted by some accident of atmosphere,) there is a change of local colour, which, when in a picture it is so exactly proportioned that we feel at once both what the local colours are in them-

§ 18. The
second quality
of light.

selves, and what is the colour and strength of the light upon them, gives us truth of tone.

For expression of effects of yellow sunlight, parts might be chosen out of the good pictures of Cuypp, which have never been equalled in art. But I much doubt if there be a single *bright* Cuypp in the world, which, taken as a whole, does not present many glaring solecisms in tone. I have not seen many fine pictures of his, which were not utterly spoiled by the vermilion dress of some principal figure, a vermilion totally unaffected and unwarmed by the golden hue of the rest of the picture, and, what is worse, with little distinction, between its own illumined and shaded parts, so that it appears altogether out of sunshine, the colour of a bright vermilion in dead, cold daylight. It is possible that the original colour may have gone down in all cases, or that these parts may have been villainously repainted; but I am the rather disposed to believe them genuine, because even throughout the best of his pictures there are evident recurrences of the same kind of solecism in other colours—greens for instance—as in the steep bank on the right of the largest picture in the Dulwich Gallery; and browns, as in the lying cow in the same picture, which is in most visible and painful contrast with the one standing beside it, the flank of the standing one being bathed in breathing sunshine, and the reposing one laid in with as dead, opaque, and lifeless brown as ever came raw from a novice's pallet. And again, in that marked 83, while the figures on the right are walking in the most precious light, and those just beyond them in the distance leave a furlong or two of pure visible sunbeams between us and them; the cows in the centre are entirely deprived, poor things! of both light and air, and have nothing but brown paint to depend upon. And these failing parts, though they often escape the eye when we are near the picture and able to dwell upon what is beautiful in it, yet so injure

§ 19. The perfection of Cuypp in this respect interfered with by numerous solecisms.

its whole effect, that I question if there be many Cuyps in which vivid colours occur, which will not lose their effect and become cold and flat at a distance of ten or twelve paces, retaining their influence only when the eye is close enough to rest on the right parts without including the whole. Take, for instance, the large one in our National Gallery, seen from the opposite door, where the black cow appears a great deal nearer than the dogs, and the golden tones of the distance look like a sepia drawing rather than like sunshine, owing chiefly to the utter want of ærial greys indicated through them.

§ 20. Turner is not so perfect in parts—far more so in the whole.

Now, there is no instance in the works of Turner of anything so faithful and imitative of sunshine as the best parts of Cuyp; but, at the same time, there is not a single vestige of the same kind of solecism. It is true, that in his fondness for colour, Turner is in the habit of allowing excessively cold fragments in his warmest pictures; but these are never, observe, warm colours with no light upon them, useless as contrasts while they are discords in the tone, but they are bits of the very coolest tints, partially removed from the general influence, and exquisitely valuable as colour, though, with all deference be it spoken, I think them sometimes slightly destructive of what would otherwise be perfect tone. For instance, the two blue and white stripes on the drifting flag of the "Slave Ship," are, I think, the least degree too purely cool. I think both the blue and white would be impossible under such a light; and in the same way the white parts of the dress of the Napoleon interfered by their coolness with the perfectly managed warmth of all the rest of the picture. But both these lights are reflexes, and it is nearly impossible to say what tones may be assumed even by the warmest light reflected from a cool surface, so that we cannot actually convict these parts of falsehood, and though we should have liked the *tone* of the picture better had they been slightly warmer, we cannot but like the *colour*

of the picture better with them as they are, while Cuypp's failing portions are not only evidently and demonstrably false, being in direct light, but are as disagreeable in colour as false in tone, and injurious to everything near them. And the best proof of the grammatical accuracy of the tones of Turner is in the perfect and unchanging influence of all his pictures at any distance. We approach only to follow the sunshine into every cranny of the leafage, and retire only to feel it diffused over the scene, the whole picture glowing like a sun or star at whatever distance we stand, and lighting the air between us and it, while many even of the best pictures of Claude must be looked close into to be felt, and lose light every foot that we retire. The smallest of the three sea ports in the National Gallery is valuable and right in tone when we are close to it, but ten yards off, it is all brick-dust, offensively and evidently false in its whole hue.

I do not doubt that the comparison of Turner with Cuypp and Claude may sound strange in most ears, but this is chiefly because we are not in the habit of analyzing and dwelling upon those difficult and daring passages of the modern master which do not at first appeal to our ordinary notions of truth, owing to his habit of uniting two, three, or even more separate tones in the same composition. In this also he strictly follows nature, for wherever climate changes, tone changes, and the climate changes with every 200 feet of elevation, so that the upper clouds are always different in tone from the lower ones, these from the rest of the landscape; and in all probability, some part of the horizon from the rest. And when nature allows this in a high degree, as in her most gorgeous effects she always will, she does not herself impress at once with intensity of tone, as in the deep and quiet yellows of a July evening, but rather with the magnificence and variety of associated colour, in which, if we give

§ 21. The power in Turner of uniting a number of tones.

time and attention to it, we shall gradually find the solemnity and the depth of twenty tones instead of one. Now in Turner's power of associating cold with warm light no one has ever approached, or even ventured into the same field with him. The old masters, content with one simple tone, sacrificed to its unity all the exquisite gradations and varied touches of relief and change by which nature unites her hours with each other. They gave the warmth of the sinking sun, overwhelming all things in its gold, but they did not give those grey passages about the horizon where, seen through its dying light, the cool and the gloom of night gather themselves for their victory. Whether it was in them impotence or judgment, it is not for me to decide. I have only to point to the daring of Turner in this respect as something to which art affords no matter of comparison, as that in which the mere attempt is, in itself, superiority. Take the evening effect with the "Temeraire." That picture will not, at the first glance, deceive as a piece of actual sunlight, but this is because there is in it more than sunlight, because under the blazing veil of vaulted fire which lights the vessel on her last path, there is a blue, deep, desolate hollow of darkness, out of which you can hear the voice of the night wind, and the dull boom of the disturbed sea, because the cold, deadly shadows of the twilight are gathering through every sunbeam, and moment by moment as you look, you will fancy some new film and faintness of the night has risen over the vastness of the departing form.

§ 22. Recapitulation.

And if, in effects of this kind, time be taken to dwell upon the individual tones, and to study the laws of their reconciliation, there will be found in the recent Academy pictures of this great artist a mass of various truth to which nothing can be brought for comparison, which stands not only unrivalled, but uncontended with, and which, when in carrying out it may be infe-

rior to some of the picked passages of the old masters, is so through deliberate choice rather to suggest a multitude of truths than to imitate one, and through a strife with difficulties of effect of which art can afford no parallel example. Nay, in the next chapter, respecting colour, we shall see farther reason for doubting the truth of Claude, Cuyp and Poussin, in tone,—reason so palpable that if these were all that were to be contended with, I should scarcely have allowed any inferiority in Turner whatsoever;* but I allow it, not so much with reference to the deceptive imitations of sunlight, wrought out with desperate exaggerations of shade, of the professed landscape painters, as with reference to the glory of Rubens, the glow of Titian, the silver tenderness of Cagliari, and perhaps more than all to the precious and pure passages of intense feeling and heavenly light, holy and undefiled, and glorious with the changeless passion of eternity, which sanctify with their shadeless peace the deep and noble conceptions of the early school of Italy,—of Fra Bartolomeo, Perugino, and the early mind of Raffaele.

* We must not leave the subject of tone without alluding to the works of the late George Barrett, which afford glorious and exalted passages of light; and John Varley, who, though less truthful in his aim, was frequently deep in his feeling. Some of the sketches of De Wint are also admirable in this respect. As for our oil pictures, the less that is said about them the better. Callcott has the truest aim; but not having any eye for colour, it is impossible for him to succeed in tone.

CHAPTER II.

OF TRUTH OF COLOUR.

§ 1. Incompetence of the late critics of Turner's colour.

THERE is nothing so high in art but that a scurrile jest can reach it; and often, the greater the work, the easier it is to turn it into ridicule. To appreciate the science of Turner's colour would require the study of a life, but to laugh at it requires little more than the knowledge that yolk of egg is yellow, and spinach green; a fund of critical information on which the remarks of most of our leading periodicals have been of late years exclusively based. We shall, however, in spite of the sulphur and treacle criticisms of our Scotch connoisseurs, and the eggs and spinach of our English ones, endeavour to test the works of this great colourist by a knowledge of nature somewhat more extensive than is to be gained by an acquaintance, however familiar, with the apothecary's shop, or the dinner table.

§ 2. Observations on the colour of G. Poussin's "La Riccia."

THERE is, in the first room of the National Gallery, a landscape attributed to Gaspar Poussin, called sometimes Aricia, sometimes Le or La Riccia, according to the fancy of catalogue printers. Whether it can be supposed to resemble the ancient Aricia, now La Riccia, close to Albano, I will not take upon me to determine, seeing that most of the towns of these old masters are quite as like one place as another; but, at any rate, it is a town on a hill, wooded with two-and-thirty bushes, of very uniform size, and possessing about the same number of leaves each. These bushes

are all painted in with one dull opaque brown, becoming very slightly greenish towards the lights, and discover in one place a bit of rock, which of course would in nature have been cool and grey beside the lustrous hues of foliage, and which, therefore, being moreover completely in shade, is consistently and scientifically painted of a very clear, pretty, and positive brick red, the only thing like colour in the picture. The foreground is a piece of road, which in order to make allowance for its greater nearness, for its being completely in light, and, it may be presumed, for the quantity of vegetation usually present on carriage-roads, is given in a very cool green grey, and the truthful colouring of the picture is completed by a number of dots in the sky on the right, with a stalk to them, of a sober and similar brown.

Not long ago, I was slowly descending this very bit of carriage-road, the first turn after you leave Albano, not a little impeded by the worthy successors of the ancient prototypes of Veiento.* It had been wild weather when I left Rome, and all across the Campagna the clouds were sweeping in sulphurous blue, with a clap of thunder or two, and breaking gleams of sun along the Claudian aqueduct, lighting up the infinity of its arches like the bridge of chaos. But as I climbed the long slope of the Alban mount, the storm swept finally to the north, and the noble outline of the domes of Albano and graceful darkness of its ilex grove rose against pure streaks of alternate blue and amber, the upper sky gradually flushing through the last fragments of rain-cloud in deep, palpitating azure, half æther and half dew. The noon-day sun came slanting down the rocky slopes of La Riccia, and its masses of entangled and tall foliage, whose autumnal tints were mixed with

§ 3. As compared with the actual scene.

* "Cæcus adulator—
Dignus Aricinos qui mendicaret ad axes,
Blandaue devexæ jactaret basia rhedæ."

the wet verdure of a thousand evergreens, were penetrated with it as with rain. I cannot call it colour, it was conflagration. Purple, and crimson, and scarlet, like the curtains of God's tabernacle, the rejoicing trees sank into the valley in showers of light, every separate leaf quivering with buoyant and burning life; each, as it turned to reflect or to transmit the sun-beam, first a torch and then an emerald. Far up into the recesses of the valley, the green vistas arched like the hollows of mighty waves of some crystalline sea, with the arbutus flowers dashed along their flanks for foam, and silver flakes of orange spray tossed into the air around them, breaking over the grey walls of rock into a thousand separate stars, fading and kindling alternately as the weak wind lifted and let them fall. Every glade of grass burned like the golden floor of heaven, opening in sudden gleams as the foliage broke and closed above it, as sheet-lightning opens in a cloud at sunset; the motionless masses of dark rock—dark though flushed with scarlet lichen,—casting their quiet shadows across its restless radiance, the fountain underneath them filling its marble hollow with blue mist and fitful sound, and over all—the multitudinous bars of amber and rose, the sacred clouds that have no darkness, and only exist to illumine, were seen in fathomless intervals between the solemn and orbéd repose of the stone pines, passing to lose themselves in the last, white, blinding lustre of the measureless line where the Campagna melted into the blaze of the sea.

§ 4. Turner himself is inferior in brilliancy to nature.

Tell me who is likest this, Poussin or Turner? Not in his most daring and dazzling efforts could Turner himself come near it, but you could not at the time have thought of or remembered the work of any other man as having the remotest hue or resemblance of what you saw. Nor am I speaking of what is uncommon or unnatural; there is no climate, no place, and scarcely an hour, in which nature does not exhibit colour which no

mortal effort can imitate or approach. For all our artificial pigments are, even when seen under the same circumstances, dead and lightless beside her living colour; the green of a growing leaf, the scarlet of a fresh flower, no art nor expedient can reach; but in addition to this, nature exhibits her hues under an intensity of sunlight which trebles their brilliancy, while the painter, deprived of this splendid aid, works still with what is actually a grey shadow compared to the force of nature's colour. Take a blade of grass and a scarlet flower, and place them so as to receive sunlight beside the brightest canvass that ever left Turner's easel, and the picture will be extinguished. So far from out-facing nature, he does not, as far as mere vividness of colour goes, one half reach her;—but does he use this brilliancy of colour on objects to which it does not properly belong? Let us compare his works in this respect with a few instances from the old masters.

There is, on the left hand side of Salvator's "Mercury § 5. Impossible colours of Salvator, Titian; and the Woodman" in our National Gallery, something without doubt intended for a rocky mountain, in the middle distance, near enough for all its fissures and crags to be distinctly visible, or, rather, for a great many awkward scratches of the brush over it to be visible, which, though not particularly representative either of one thing or another, are without doubt intended to be symbolical of rocks. Now no mountain in full light, and near enough for its details of crag to be seen, is without great variety of delicate colour. Salvator has painted it throughout without one instant of variation; but this, I suppose, is simplicity and generalization;—let it pass: but what is the colour? *Pure sky blue*, without one grain of grey, or any modifying hue whatsoever;—the same brush which had just given the bluest parts of the sky has been more loaded at the same part of the pallet, and the whole mountain thrown in with unmitigated ultra-marine. Now mountains only

can become pure blue when there is so much air between us and them that they become mere flat, dark shades, every detail being totally lost: they become blue when they become air, and not till then. Consequently this part of Salvator's painting, being of hills perfectly clear and near, with all their details visible, is, as far as colour is concerned, broad, bold falsehood—the direct assertion of direct impossibility.

In the whole range of Turner's works, recent or of old date, you will not find an instance of anything near enough to have details visible, painted in sky blue. Wherever Turner gives blue, there he gives atmosphere; it is air, not object. Blue he is, in his sea; so is nature;—blue he is, as a sapphire, in his extreme distance; so is nature; blue he is, in the misty shadows and hollows of his hills; so is nature: but blue he is *not*, where detail and illumined surface are visible; as he comes into light and character, so he breaks into warmth and varied hue; nor is there in one of his works, and I speak of the Academy pictures especially, one touch of blue which is not to be accounted for, and proved right and full of meaning.

I do not say that Salvator's distance is not artist-like; both in that, and in the yet more glaringly false distances of Titian above alluded to, and in hundreds of others of equal boldness of exaggeration, I can take some delight, and perhaps should be sorry to see them other than they are; but it is somewhat singular to hear people talking of Turner's exquisite care and watchfulness as false in colour, and receiving such cases of preposterous and audacious fiction as these with the most generous and simple credulity.

§ 6. Poussin,
and Claude.

Again, in the upper sky of the picture of Nicholas Poussin, before noticed, the clouds are of a very fine clear olive green, about the same tint as the brightest parts of the trees beneath them. They cannot have altered (or else the trees must have been painted in

grey), for the hue is harmonious and well united with the rest of the picture, and the blue and white in the centre of the sky are still fresh and pure. Now a green sky in open and illumined distance is very frequent, and very beautiful; but rich olive-green clouds, as far as I am acquainted with nature, are a piece of colour in which she is not apt to indulge. You will be puzzled to show me such a thing in the recent works of Turner.* Again, take any important group of trees, I do not care whose—Claude's, Salvator's, or Poussin's—with lateral light (that in the "Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca," or Gaspar's "Sacrifice of Isaac," for instance): Can you seriously suppose that those murky browns and melancholy greens are representative of the tints of leaves under full noon-day sun? I know that you cannot help looking upon all these pictures as pieces of dark relief against a light wholly proceeding from the distances; but they are nothing of the kind—they are noon and morning effects with full lateral light. Be so kind as to match the colour of a leaf in the sun (the darkest you like), as nearly as you can, and bring your matched colour and set it beside one of these groups of trees, and take a blade of common grass, and set it beside any part of the fullest light of their foregrounds, and then talk about the truth of colour of the old masters!

And let not arguments respecting the sublimity or fidelity of *impression* be brought forward here. I have nothing whatever to do with this at present. I am not

* There is perhaps nothing more characteristic of a great colourist than his power of using greens in strange places without their being felt as such, or at least than a constant preference of green grey to purple grey. And this hue of Poussin's clouds would have been perfectly agreeable and allowable, had there been gold or crimson enough in the rest of the picture to have thrown it into grey. It is only because the lower clouds are pure white and blue, and because the trees are of the same colour as the clouds, that the cloud colour becomes false. There is a fine instance of a sky, green in itself, but turned grey by the opposition of warm colour, in Turner's "Devonport with the Dockyards."

talking about what is sublime, but about what is true. People attack Turner on this ground;—they never speak of beauty or sublimity with respect to him, but of nature and truth, and let them support their own masters on the same grounds. Perhaps I may have the very deepest veneration for the *feeling* of the old masters, but I must not let it influence me now—my business is to match colours, not to talk sentiment. Neither let it be said that I am going too much into details, and that general truths may be obtained by local falsehood. It is quite true, that in this particular department of art, colour, one error may often be concealed by another, and one falsehood made to look right by cleverly matching another to it; but this only enables us to be certain, that when we have proved one colour to be false, if it looks right, there must be something else false to keep it in countenance, and so we have proved two falsehoods instead of one. And indeed truth is only to be measured by close comparison of actual facts; we may talk for ever about it in generals, and prove nothing. We cannot tell what effect falsehood may produce on this or that person, but we can very well tell what is false and what is not, and if it produce on our senses the effect of truth, that only demonstrates their imperfection and inaccuracy, and need of cultivation. Turner's colour is glaring to one person's sensations, and beautiful to another's. This proves nothing. Poussin's colour is right to one, soot to another. This proves nothing. There is no means of arriving at any conclusion but close comparison of both with the known and demonstrable hues of nature, and this comparison will invariably turn Claude or Poussin into blackness, and even Turner into grey.

§ 7. Turner's translation of colours.

It is true that there are, here and there, in the Academy pictures, passages in which Turner has translated the unattainable intensity of one tone of colour, into the attainable pitch of a higher one: the golden

green, for instance, of intense sunshine on verdure, into pure yellow, because he knows it to be impossible, with any mixture of blue whatsoever, to give faithfully its relative intensity of light, and Turner always will have his light and shade right, whatever it costs him in colour. But he does this in rare cases, and even then over very small spaces, and I should be obliged to his critics if they would go out to some warm, mossy green bank in full summer sunshine, and try to reach its tone, and when they find, as find they will, Indian yellow and chrome look dark beside it, let them tell me candidly which is nearest truth, the gold of Turner, or the mourning and murky olive browns and verdigris greens in which Claude, with the industry and intelligence of a Sevres china painter, drags the laborious bramble leaves over his childish foreground.

But it is singular enough that the chief attacks on Turner for overcharged brilliancy, are made, not when there could by any possibility be any chance of his outstepping nature, but when he has taken subjects which no colours of earth could ever vie with or reach, such for instance, as his sunsets among the high clouds. When I come to speak of skies, I shall point out what divisions, proportioned to their elevation, exist in the character of clouds. It is the highest region,—that exclusively characterized by white, filmy, multitudinous, and quiet clouds, arranged in bars, or streaks, or flakes, of which I speak at present, a region which no landscape painters have ever made one effort to represent, except Rubens and Turner—the latter taking it for his most favourite and frequent study. Now we have been speaking hitherto of what is constant and necessary in nature, of the ordinary effects of daylight on ordinary colours, and we repeat again, that no gorgeousness of the pallet can reach even these. But it is a widely different thing when nature herself takes a colouring fit, and does something extraordinary, something really to

§ 8. Notice of effects in which no brilliancy of art can even approach that of reality.

exhibit her power. She has a thousand ways and means of rising above herself, but incomparably the noblest manifestations of her capability of colour are in these sunsets among the high clouds. I speak especially of the moment before the sun sinks, when his light turns pure rose-colour, and when this light falls upon a zenith covered with countless cloud-forms of inconceivable delicacy, threads and flakes of vapour, which would in common daylight be pure snow white, and which give therefore fair field to the tone of light. There is then no limit to the multitude, and no check to the intensity of the hues assumed. The whole sky from the zenith to the horizon becomes one molten, mantling sea of colour and fire, every black bar turns into massy gold, every ripple and wave into unsullied, shadowless, crimson, and purple, and scarlet, and colours for which there are no words in language, and no ideas in the mind,—things which can only be conceived while they are visible,—the intense hollow blue of the upper sky melting through it all,—showing here deep, and pure, and lightless, there, modulated by the filmy, formless body of the transparent vapour, till it is lost imperceptibly in its crimson and gold. Now there is no connection, no one link of association or resemblance, between those skies and the work of any mortal hand but Turner's. He alone has followed nature in these her highest efforts; he follows her faithfully, but far behind, follows at such a distance below her intensity that the Napoleon of last year's exhibition, and the Temeraire of the year before, would look colourless and cold if the eye came upon them after one of nature's sunsets among the high clouds. But there are a thousand reasons why this should not be believed. The concurrence of circumstances necessary to produce the sunsets of which I speak does not take place above five or six times in a summer, and then only for a space of from five to ten minutes, just as the sun

§ 9. Reasons for the usual incredulity of the observer with respect to their representation.

reaches the horizon. Considering how seldom people think of looking for a sunset at all, and how seldom, if they do, they are in a position from which it can be fully seen, the chances that their attention should be awake, and their position favourable, during these few flying instants of the year, is almost as nothing. What can the citizen, who can see only the red light on the canvass of the waggon at the end of the street, and the crimson colour of the bricks of his neighbour's chimney, know of the flood of fire which deluges the sky from the horizon to the zenith? What can even the quiet inhabitant of the English lowlands, whose scene for the manifestation of the fire of heaven is limited to the tops of hayricks, and the rooks' nests in the old elm-trees, know of the mighty passages of splendour which are tossed from Alp to Alp over the azure of a thousand miles of champaign? Even granting the constant vigour of observation, and supposing the possession of such impossible knowledge, it needs but a moment's reflection to prove how incapable the memory is of retaining for any time the distinct image of the sources even of its most vivid impressions. What recollection have we of the sunsets which delighted us last year? We may know that they were magnificent, or glowing, but no distinct image of colour or form is retained—nothing of whose *degree* (for the great difficulty with the memory is to retain, not facts, but *degrees* of fact) we could be so certain as to say of anything now presented to us, that it is like it. If we did say so, we should be wrong; for we may be quite certain that the energy of an impression fades from the memory, and becomes more and more indistinct every day, and thus we compare a faded and indistinct image with the decision and certainty of one present to the senses. How constantly do we affirm that the thunderstorm of last week was the most terrible one we ever saw in our lives, because we compare it, not with the

§ 10. Colour of
the "Napoleon."

thunderstorm of last year, but with the faded and feeble recollection of it. And so, when we enter an exhibition, as we have no definite standard of truth before us, our feelings are toned down and subdued to the quietness of colour which is all that human power can ordinarily attain to, and when we turn to a piece of higher and closer truth, approaching the pitch of the colour of nature, but to which we are not guided, as we should be in nature, by corresponding gradations of light everywhere around us, but which is isolated and cut off suddenly by a frame and a wall, and surrounded by darkness and coldness, what can we expect but that it should surprise and shock the feelings? Suppose, where the "Napoleon" hung in the Academy last year, there could have been left, instead, an opening in the wall, and through that opening, in the midst of the obscurity of the dim room and the smoke-laden atmosphere, there could suddenly have been poured the full glory of a tropical sunset, reverberated from the sea; How would you have shrunk, blinded, from its scarlet and intolerable lightnings! What picture in the room would not have been blackness after it? And why then do you blame Turner because he dazzles you? Does not the falsehood rest with those who do *not*? There was not one hue in this whole picture which was not far below what nature would have used in the same circumstances, nor was there one inharmonious or at variance with the rest;—the stormy blood-red of the horizon, the scarlet of the breaking sunlight, the rich crimson browns of the wet and illumined sea-weed, the pure gold and purple of the upper sky, and, shed through it all, the deep passage of solemn blue, where the cold moonlight fell on one pensive spot of the limitless shore—all were given with harmony as perfect as their colour was intense; and if, instead of passing, as I doubt not you did, in the hurry of your unreflecting prejudice, you had paused but so much as one

quarter of an hour before the picture, you would have found the sense of air and space blended with every line, and breathing in every cloud, and every colour instinct and radiant with visible, glowing, absorbing light.

It is to be observed, however, in general, that wherever in brilliant effects of this kind, we approach to anything like a true statement of nature's colour, there must yet be a distinct difference in the impression we convey, because we cannot approach her *light*. All such hues are usually given by her with an accompanying intensity of sunbeams which dazzles and overpowers the eye, so that it cannot rest on the actual colours, nor understand what they are; and hence in art, in rendering all effects of this kind, there must be a want of the ideas of *imitation*, which are the great source of enjoyment to the ordinary observer, because we can only give one series of truths, those of colour, and are unable to give the accompanying truths of light, so that the more true we are in colour, the greater, ordinarily, will be the discrepancy felt between the intensity of hue and the feebleness of light. But the painter who really loves nature will not, on this account, give you a faded and feeble image, which indeed may appear to you to be right, because your feelings can detect no discrepancy in its parts, but which he knows to derive its apparent truth from a systematized falsehood. No; he will make you understand and feel that art *cannot* imitate nature—that where it appears to do so, it must malign her, and mock her. He will give you, or state to you, such truths as are in his power, completely and perfectly; and those which he cannot give, he will leave to your imagination. If you are acquainted with nature, you will know all he has given to be true, and you will supply from your memory and from your heart that light which he cannot give. If you are unacquainted with nature, seek elsewhere for whatever may happen to satisfy your feelings; but do not talk about truth.

§ 11. Necessary discrepancy between the attainable brilliancy of colour and light.

§ 12. This discrepancy less in Turner than in other colourists.

Nevertheless the aim and struggle of the artist must always be to do away with this discrepancy as far as the powers of art admit, not by lowering his colour, but by increasing his light. And it is indeed by this that the works of Turner are peculiarly distinguished from those of all other colourists, by the dazzling intensity, namely, of the light which he sheds through every hue, and which, far more than their brilliant colour, is the real source of their overpowering effect upon the eye, an effect so *reasonably* made the subject of perpetual animadversion, as if the sun which they represent were quite a quiet, and subdued, and gentle, and manageable luminary, and never dazzled anybody, under any circumstances whatsoever. I am exceedingly fond of standing by a bright Turner in the Academy, to listen to the unintentional compliments of the crowd—"What a glaring thing!" "I declare I can't look at it!" "Don't it hurt your eyes?"—expressed as if they were in the constant habit of looking the sun full in the face with the most perfect comfort and entire facility of vision.

§ 13. Its great extent in a landscape attributed to Rubens.

It is curious after hearing people expose themselves in maligning some of Turner's noble passages of light, to pass to some really ungrammatical and false picture of the old masters, in which we have colour given *without* light. Take, for instance, the landscape attributed to Rubens, No. 175, in the Dulwich Gallery. I never have spoken, and I never will speak of Rubens but with the most reverential feeling; I look upon him, taken merely as an artist, as the master of masters, alone and incomparable, and I fully expect that the world will see another Titian and another Raffaele, before it sees another Rubens. Whenever, therefore, I see anything attributed to him artistically wrong, or testifying a want of knowledge of nature, or of feeling for colour, I become instantly incredulous; and if I ever advance anything affirmed to be his as such, it is not so much under the idea that it can be his, as to show what a great name can

impose upon the public. The landscape I speak of has beyond a doubt high qualities in it; I can scarcely make up my mind whether to like it or not, but at any rate, it is something which the public are in the habit of admiring and taking upon trust to any extent. Now the sudden streak and circle of yellow and crimson in the middle of the sky of that picture, being the occurrence of a fragment of a sunset colour in pure daylight, and in perfect isolation, while at the same time it is rather darker, when translated into light and shade, than brighter than the rest of the sky, is a case of such bold absurdity, come from whose pencil it may, that if every error which Turner has fallen into in the whole course of his life were concentrated into one, that one would not equal it; and as our connoisseurs gaze upon this with never-ending approbation, we must not be surprised that the accurate perceptions which thus take delight in pure fiction, should consistently be disgusted by Turner's fidelity and truth.

Hitherto, however, we have been speaking of vividness of pure colour, and showing that it is used by Turner only where nature uses it, and in less degree. But we have hitherto, therefore, been speaking of a most limited and uncharacteristic portion of his works, for Turner, like all great colourists, is distinguished not more for his power of dazzling and overwhelming the eye with intensity of effect, than for his power of doing so by the use of subdued and gentle means. There is no man living more cautious and sparing in the use of pure colour than Turner. To say that he never perpetrates anything like the blue excrescences of foreground, or hills *shot* like a housekeeper's best silk gown, with blue and red, which certain of our celebrated artists consider the essence of the sublime, would be but a poor compliment. I might as well praise the portraits of Titian because they have not the grimace and paint of a clown in a pantomime; but I do say, and say with

§ 14. Turner scarcely ever uses pure or vivid colour.

confidence, that there is scarcely a landscape artist of the present day, however sober and lightless their effects may look, who does not employ more pure and raw colour than Turner, and that the ordinary tinsel and trash, or rather vicious and perilous stuff, according to the power of the mind producing it, with which the walls of our academy are half covered, disgracing, in weak hands, or in more powerful, degrading and corrupting our whole school of art, is based on a system of colour beside which Turner's is as Vesta to Cotytto—the chastity of fire to the foulness of earth. Every picture of this great colourist has, in one or two parts of it, (key-notes of the whole) points where the system of each individual colour is concentrated by a single stroke, as pure as it can come from the pallet; but throughout the great space and extent of even the most brilliant of his works, there will not be found a raw colour; that is to say, there is no warmth which has not grey in it, and no blue which has not warmth in it; and the tints in which he most excels and distances all other men, the most cherished and inimitable portions of his colour, are, as with all perfect colourists they must be, his greys.

§ 15. His great tenderness in all large spaces of colour.

And it is, perhaps, herein that the chief beauty, excellence, and truth, of Turner's colour, as distinguished from the absurd, futile, and fatal efforts which have been made to imitate it, chiefly lies. For Nature, in the same way, never uses raw colour; there is a tenderness and subdued tone about her purest hues, and a warmth, glow, and light in her soberest. It is instructive in this respect, to compare the sky of the "Mercury and Argus" with the various illustrations of the serenity, space, and sublimity naturally inherent in blue and pink, of which every year's exhibition brings forward enough, and to spare. In the "Mercury and Argus," the pale and vaporous blue of the heated sky is broken with grey and pearly white, the gold

colour of the light warming it more or less as it approaches or retires from the sun; but throughout, there is not a grain of pure blue, all is subdued and warmed at the same time by the mingling grey and gold, up to the very zenith, where, breaking through the flaky mist, the transparent and deep azure of the sky is expressed with a single crumbling touch, the key-note of the whole is given, and every part of it passes at once far into glowing and ærial space. The reader can scarcely fail to remember at once sundry works in contradistinction to this, with great names attached to them, in which the sky is a sheer piece of plumber's and glazier's work, and should be valued per yard, with heavy extra charge for ultramarine; skies, in which the raw, meaningless colour is shaded steadily and perseveringly down, passing through the pink into the yellow as a young lady shades her worsted, to the successful production of a very handsome oil-cloth, but certainly not of a picture.

But throughout the works of Turner, the same § 16. The basis of grey, under all his vivid hues. truthful principle of delicate and subdued colour is carried out with a care and labour of which it is difficult to form a conception. He gives a dash of pure white for his highest light; but all the other whites of his picture are pearled down with grey or gold. He gives a fold of pure crimson to the drapery of his nearest figure, but all his other crimsons will be deepened with black, or warmed with yellow. In one deep reflection of his distant sea, we catch a trace of the purest blue, but all the rest is palpitating with a varied and delicate gradation of harmonized tint, which indeed looks vivid blue as a mass, but is only so by opposition. It is the most difficult, the most rare thing, to find in his works a definite space, however small, of unconnected colour, that is, either of a blue which has nothing to connect it with the warmth, or of a warm colour, which has nothing to connect it with

the greys of the whole ; and the result is, that there is a general system and under-current of grey pervading the whole of his colour, out of which his highest lights, and those local touches of pure colour, which are, as I said before, the key-notes of the picture, flash with the peculiar brilliancy and intensity in which he stands alone.

§ 17. The variety and fulness even of his most simple tones.

Intimately associated with this toning down and connection of the colours actually used, is his inimitable power of varying and blending them, so as never to give a quarter of an inch of canvass without a change in it, a melody as well as a harmony of one kind or another. Observe, I am not at present speaking of this as artistical or desirable in itself, not as a characteristic of the great colourist, but as the aim of the simple follower of nature. For it is strange to see how marvellously nature varies the most general and simple of her tones. A mass of mountain seen against the light, may at first appear all of one blue ; and so it is, blue as a whole, by comparison with other parts of the landscape. But look how that blue is made up. There are black shadows in it under the crags, there are green shadows along the turf, there are grey half-lights upon the rocks, there are faint touches of stealthy warmth and cautious light along their edges, every bush, every stone, every tuft of moss has its voice in the matter, and joins with individual character in the universal will. Who is there who can do this as Turner will ? The old masters would have settled the matter at once with a transparent, agreeable, but monotonous grey. Many among the moderns would probably be equally monotonous with absurd and false colours. Turner only would give the uncertainty—the palpitating, perpetual change—the subjection of all to a great influence, without one part or portion being lost or merged in it—the unity of action with infinity of agent. And I wish to insist on this the more particularly, because it is one of

§ 18. Following the infinite and unap-

the eternal principles of nature, that she will not have one line nor colour, nor one portion nor atom of space, without a change in it. There is not one of her shadows, tints, or lines that is not in a state of perpetual variation: I do not mean in time, but in space. There is not a leaf in the world which has the *same colour* visible over its whole surface; it has a white high light somewhere; and in proportion as it curves to or from that focus, the colour is brighter or greyer. Pick up a common flint from the roadside, and count, if you can, its changes and hues of colour. Every bit of bare ground under your feet has in it a thousand such—the grey pebbles, the warm ochre, the green of incipient vegetation, the greys and blacks of its reflexes and shadows, might keep a painter at work for a month, if he were obliged to follow them touch for touch: how much more when the same infinity of change is carried out with vastness of object and space. The extreme of distance may appear at first monotonous; but the least examination will show it to be full of every kind of change—that its outlines are perpetually melting and appearing again—sharp here, vague there—now lost altogether, now just hinted and still confused among each other—and so for ever in a state and necessity of change. Hence wherever in a painting we have unvaried colour extended even over a small space, there is falsehood. Nothing can be natural which is monotonous; nothing true which only tells one story. The brown foreground and rocks of Claude's "Sinon before Priam" are as false as colour can be: first, because there never was such a brown under sunlight, for even the sand and cinders (volcanic tufa) about Naples, granting that he had studied from these ugliest of all formations, are, where they are fresh fractured, golden and lustrous in full light, compared to these ideals of crag, and become like all other rocks, quiet and grey when weathered; and secondly, because no rock that ever nature stained

proachable
variety of
nature.

is without its countless breaking tints of varied vegetation. And even Stanfield, master as he is of rock form, is apt in the same way to give us here and there a little bit of mud, instead of stone; while no artist, dead or living, except Turner, has ever attained the constant and perfect realization of the great principle of nature—that there shall be nothing without change: with him, and with him only, every individual stroke of the brush has in itself graduation and degrees of colour; and a visible space of monotony is a physical impossibility. Every part is abundant and perfect in itself, though still a member of the great whole; and every square inch contains in itself a system of colour and light, as complete, as studied, and as wonderful as the great arrangement of that to which it is subordinate.

§ 19. His dislike of purple, and fondness for the opposition of yellow and black. The principles of nature in this respect.

What I am next about to say with respect to Turner's colour, I should wish to be received with caution, as it admits of dispute. I think that the first approach to viciousness of colour in any master is commonly indicated chiefly by a prevalence of purple, and an absence of yellow. I think nature mixes yellow with almost every one of her hues, never, or very rarely, using red without it, but frequently using yellow with scarcely any red; and I believe it will be in consequence found that her favourite opposition, that which generally characterizes and gives tone to her colour, is yellow and black, passing, as it retires, into white and blue. It is beyond dispute that the great fundamental opposition of Rubens is yellow and black; and that on this, concentrated in one part of the picture, and modified in various greys throughout, chiefly depend the tones of all his finest works. And in Titian, though there is a far greater tendency to the purple than in Rubens, I believe no red is ever mixed with the pure blue, or glazed over it, which has not in it a modifying quantity of yellow. At all events, I am nearly certain that whatever rich and pure purples are introduced locally, by the

great colourists, nothing is so destructive of all fine colour as the slightest tendency to purple in general tone; and I am equally certain that Turner is distinguished from all the vicious colourists of the present day, by the foundation of all his tones being black, yellow, and the intermediate greys, while the tendency of our common glare-seekers is invariably to pure, cold, impossible purples. So fond indeed is Turner of black and yellow, that he has given us more than one composition, both drawings and paintings, based on these two colours alone, of which the magnificent "Quilleboeuf," which I consider one of the most perfect pieces of simple colour existing, is a most striking example; and I think that where, as in some of the late "Venices," there has been something like a marked appearance of purple tones, even though exquisitely corrected by vivid orange and warm green in the foreground, the general colour has not been so perfect or truthful: my own feelings would always guide me rather to the warm greys of such pictures as the "Snowstorm," or the glowing scarlet and gold of the "Napoleon" and "Slaveship." But I do not insist at present on this part of the subject, as being perhaps more proper for future examination, when we are considering the ideal of colour.

The above remarks have been made entirely with reference to the recent Academy pictures, which have been chiefly attacked for their colour. I by no means intend them to apply to the early works of Turner, those which the enlightened newspaper critics are perpetually talking about as characteristic of a time when Turner was "really great." He is, and was, really great, from the time when he first could hold a brush, but he never was so great as he is now. The "Crossing the Brook," glorious as it is as a composition, and perfect in all that is most desirable and most ennobling in art, is scarcely to be looked upon as a piece of colour;

§ 20. His early works are false in colour.

it is an agreeable, cool, grey rendering of space and form, but it is not colour; if it be regarded as such, it is thoroughly false and vapid, and very far inferior to the tones of the same kind given by Claude. The reddish brown in the foreground of the "Fall of Carthage," with all diffidence be it spoken, is, as far as my feelings are competent to judge, crude, sunless, and in every way wrong, and both this picture, and the "Building of Carthage," though this latter is far the finer of the two, are quite unworthy of Turner as a colourist.

§ 21. His drawings invariably perfect.

Not so with the drawings; these, countless as they are, from the earliest to the latest, though presenting an unbroken chain of increasing difficulty overcome and truth illustrated, are all, according to their aim, equally faultless as to colour. Whatever we have hitherto said, applies to them in its fullest extent, though each, being generally the realization of some effect actually seen, and realized but once, requires almost a separate essay. As a class, they are far quieter and chaster than the Academy pictures, and were they better known, might enable our connoisseurs to form a somewhat more accurate judgment of the intense study of nature on which all Turner's colour is based, but it would be absurd at present to occupy more time with so inexhaustible a subject; the colour of these inimitable drawings must be considered when we examine them individually, not separated from what it illustrates. Taken generally, the chief characteristics of Turner's colour, whether in drawings or paintings, considered only with respect to truth, and without reference to composition or beauty, of which at present we can take no cognizance, are those above pointed out, which we shall briefly recapitulate.

§ 22. The perfection and importance of his greys, Recapitulation.

1st. Prevalence, variety, value, and exquisite composition of greys. The grey tones are, in the drawings especially, the most wonderful as well as the most

valuable portions of the whole picture. Some of the very first-rate drawings are merely harmonies of different kinds of grey; "Long ships lighthouse, Land's End," for instance. Several appear to have been drawn entirely with modulated greys first, and then sparingly heightened with colour on the lights, but whatever the subject, and however brilliant the effect, the grey tones are the foundation of all its beauty.

2. Refinement, delicacy, and uncertainty in all colours whatsoever. Positive colour is, as I before said, the rarest thing imaginable in Turner's works, and the exquisite refinement with which variety of hue is carried into his feeblest tints is altogether unparalleled in art. The drawing of Colchester, in the England series, is an example of this delicacy and fulness of tint together, with which nothing but nature can be compared. But I have before me while I write, a drawing of the most vigorous and powerful colour, with concentrated aërial blue opposed to orange and crimson. I should have fancied at a little distance, that a cake of ultramarine had been used pure upon it. But, when I look close, I discover that all which looks blue in effect, is in reality a changeful grey, with black and green in it, and bluer tones breaking through here and there more or less decisively, but without one grain or touch of pure blue in the whole picture, except on a figure in the foreground, nor one grain nor touch of any colour whatsoever, of which it is possible to say what it is, or how many are united in it. Such will invariably be found the case, even with the most brilliant and daring of Turner's systems of colour.

3. Dislike of purple, and fondness for opposition of yellow and black, or clear blue and white.

4. Entire subjection of the whole system of colour to § 23. The sub-
 that of chiaroscuro. I have not before noticed this, ^{jection of his}
 because I wished to show how true and faithful Turner's ^{system of}
 colour to that ^{colour to that}
 of chiaroscuro.

colour is, as such, without reference to any associated principles. But the perfection and consummation of its truth rests in its subordination to light and shade, a subordination which there is no need to prove here, as every engraving from his works—and few are unengraved—is sufficient demonstration of it. I have before shown the inferiority and unimportance in nature, of colour, as a truth, compared with light and shade. That inferiority is maintained and asserted by all really great works of colour; but most by Turner's, as their colour is most intense. Whatever brilliancy he may choose to assume, is subjected to an inviolable law of chiaroscuro, from which there is no appeal. No richness nor depth of tint is considered of value enough to atone for the loss of one particle of arranged light. No brilliancy of hue is permitted to interfere with the depth of a determined shadow. And hence it is, that while engravings from works far less splendid in colour are often vapid and cold, because the little colour employed has not been rightly based on light and shade, an engraving from Turner is always beautiful and forcible in proportion as the colour of the original has been intense, and never in a single instance has failed to express the picture as a perfect composition. Powerful and captivating and faithful as his colour is, it is the least important of all his excellencies, because it is the least important feature of nature. He paints in colour, but he thinks in light and shade; and were it necessary, rather than lose one line of his forms, or one ray of his sunshine, would, I apprehend, be content to paint in black and white to the end of his life. It is by mistaking the shadow for the substance, and aiming at the brilliancy and the fire, without perceiving of what deep-studied shade and inimitable form it is at once the result and the illustration, that the host of his imitators sink into deserved disgrace. For no colour *can* be beautiful, unless it is subordinate; it cannot take the lead without perish-

ing—in superseding the claims of other excellencies, it annihilates its own. To say that the chief excellence of a picture is its colour, is to say that its colour is imperfect. In all truly great painters, and in Turner's more than all, the hue is a beautiful auxiliary in working out the great impression to be conveyed, but is not the source nor the essence of that impression; it is little more than a visible melody, given to raise and assist the mind in the reception of nobler ideas—as sacred passages of sweet sound, to prepare the feelings for the reading of the mysteries of God.

CHAPTER III.

OF TRUTH OF CHIAROSCURO.

§ 1. We are not at present to examine particular effects of light.

IT is not my intention to enter, in the present portion of the work, upon any examination of Turner's particular effects of light. We must know something about what is beautiful before we speak of them—we must not bring their poetry and their religion down to optics. I cannot watch the sun descending on Sinai, or stand in the starry twilight by the gates of Bethlehem, and begin talking of refraction and polarization. It is your heart that must be the judge here—if you do not *feel* the light, you will not see it. When, therefore, I have proved to you what is beautiful, and what God intended to give pleasure to your spirit in its purity, we will come to Turner as the painter of light—for so emphatically he should be called—and, picture by picture, we will trace at once the truth and the intention.

But at present I wish only to insist upon two great principles of chiaroscuro, which are observed throughout the works of the great modern master, and set at defiance by the ancients—great general laws, which may, or may not, be sources of beauty, but whose observance is indisputably necessary to truth.

Go out some bright sunny day in winter, and look for a tree with a broad trunk, having rather delicate boughs hanging down on the sunny side, near the trunk. Stand four or five yards from it, with your back to the sun. You will find that the boughs between

you and the trunk of the tree are very indistinct, that you confound them in places with the trunk itself, and cannot possibly trace one of them from its insertion to its extremity. But the shadows which they cast upon the trunk, you will find clear, dark, and distinct, perfectly traceable through their whole course, except when they are interrupted by the crossing boughs. And if you retire backwards, you will come to a point where you cannot see the intervening boughs at all, or only a fragment of them here and there, but can still see their shadows perfectly plain. Now, this may serve to show you the immense prominence and importance of shadows where there is anything like bright light. They are, in fact, commonly far more conspicuous than the thing which casts them, for being as large as the casting object, and altogether made up of a blackness deeper than the darkest part of the casting object, (while that object is also broken up with positive and reflected lights,) their large, broad, unbroken spaces, tell strongly on the eye, especially as all form is rendered partially, often totally, invisible within them, and as they are suddenly terminated by the sharpest lines which nature ever shows. For no outline of objects whatsoever is so sharp as the edge of a close shadow. Put your finger over a piece of white paper in the sun, and observe the difference between the softness of the outline of the finger itself and the decision of the edge of the shadow. And note also the excessive gloom of the latter. A piece of black cloth, laid in the light, will not attain one-fourth of the blackness of the paper under the shadow.

Hence shadows are in reality, when the sun is shining, the most conspicuous thing in a landscape, next to the highest lights. All forms are understood and explained chiefly by their agency: the roughness of the bark of a tree, for instance, is not seen in the light, nor in the shade; it is only seen between the two, where the sha-

§ 3. And therefore the distinctness of shadows is the chief means of expressing vividness of light.

dows of the ridges explain it. And hence, if we have to express vivid light, our very first aim must be to get the shadows sharp and visible; and this is not to be done by blackness (though indeed chalk on white paper is the only thing which comes up to the intensity of real shadows), but by keeping them perfectly flat, keen, and even. A very pale shadow, if it be quite flat—if it conceal the details of the objects it crosses—if it be grey and cold compared to their colour, and very sharp edged, will be far more conspicuous, and make everything out of it look a great deal more like sunlight, than a shadow ten times its depth, shaded off at the edge, and confounded with the colour of the objects on which it falls. Now the old masters of the Italian school, in almost all their works, directly reverse this principle: they blacken their shadows till the picture becomes quite appalling, and everything in it invisible; but they make a point of losing their edges, and carrying them off by gradation; in consequence utterly destroying every appearance of sunlight. All their shadows are the faint, secondary darknesses of mere *daylight*; the sun has nothing whatever to do with them. The shadow between the pages of the book which you hold in your hand is distinct and visible enough (though you are, I suppose, reading it by the ordinary daylight of your room), out of the sun; and this weak and secondary shadow is all that we ever find in the Italian masters, as indicative of sunshine. Even Cuyp and Berghem, though they know thoroughly well what they are about in their foregrounds, forget the principle in their distances; and though in Claude's sea-ports, where he has plain architecture to deal with, he gives us something like real shadows along the stones, the moment we come to ground and foliage with lateral light, away go the shadows and the sun together. In the "Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca," in our own gallery, the trunks of the trees between the water-wheel and the white

§ 4. Total absence of such distinctness in the works of the Italian school.

§ 5. And partial absence in the Dutch.

figure in the middle distance, are dark and visible; but their shadows are scarcely discernible on the ground, and are quite vague and lost in the building. In nature, every bit of the shadow would have been darker than the darkest part of the trunks, and both on the ground and building would have been defined and conspicuous, while the trunks themselves would have been faint, confused, and indistinguishable, in their illumined parts, from the grass or distance. So in Poussin's "Phocion," the shadow of the stick on the stone in the right hand corner, is shaded off and lost, while you see the stick plain all the way. In nature's sunlight it would have been the direct reverse—you would have seen the shadow black and sharp all the way down; but you would have had to look for the stick, which in all probability would in several places have been confused with the stone behind it.

And so throughout the works of Claude, Poussin, and Salvator, we shall find, especially in their conventional foliage, and unarticulated barbarisms of rock, that their whole sum and substance of chiaroscuro is merely the gradation and variation which nature gives in the *body* of her shadows, and that all which they do to express sunshine, she does to vary shade. They take only one step, while she always takes two; marking, in the first place, with violent decision, the great transition from sun to shade, and then varying the shade itself with a thousand gentle gradations and double shadows, in themselves equivalent, and more than equivalent, to all that the old masters did for their entire chiaroscuro.

Now if there be one principle, or secret more than another, on which Turner depends for attaining brilliancy of light, it is his clear and exquisite drawing of the *shadows*. Whatever is obscure, misty, or undefined in his objects or his atmosphere, he takes care that the shadows be sharp and clear—and then he

§ 6. The perfection of Turner's works in this respect.

knows that the light will take care of itself, and he makes them clear, not by blackness, but by excessive evenness, unity, and sharpness of edge. He will keep them clear and distinct, and make them felt as shadows, though they are so faint, that, but for their decisive forms, we should not have observed them for darkness at all. He will throw them one after another like transparent veils, along the earth and upon the air, till the whole picture palpitates with them, and yet the darkest of them will be a faint grey, imbued and penetrated with light. The pavement on the left of the "Hero and Leander," is about the most thorough piece of this kind of sorcery that I remember in art; but of the general principle, not one of his works is without constant evidence. Take the vignette of the garden opposite the title-page of Rogers's Poems, and note the drawing of the nearest balustrade on the right. The balusters themselves are faint and misty, and the light through them feeble; but the shadows of them are sharp and dark, and the intervening light as intense as it can be left. And see how much more distinct the shadow of the running figure is on the pavement, than the chequers of the pavement itself. Observe the shadows on the trunk of the tree at page 91, how they conquer all the details of the trunk itself, and become darker and more conspicuous than any part of the boughs or limbs, and so in the vignette to Campbell's "Beech-tree's Petition." Take the beautiful concentration of all that is most characteristic of Italy as she is, at page 168 of Rogers's Italy, where we have the long shadows of the trunks made by far the most conspicuous thing in the whole foreground, and hear how Wordsworth, the keenest-eyed of all modern poets for what is deep and essential in nature, illustrates Turner here, as we shall find him doing in all other points:—

At the root
 Of that tall pine, the shadow of whose bare
 And slender stem, while here I sit at eve,
 Oft stretches tow'rd me, like a long straight path,
 Traced faintly in the greensward.—*Excursion*, Book VI.

So again in the "Rhymers' Glen," (Illustrations to Scott) note the intertwining of the shadows across the path, and the chequering of the trunks by them; and again on the bridge in the "Armstrong's Tower;" and yet more in the long avenue of "Brienne," where we have a length of two or three miles expressed by the playing shadows alone, and the whole picture filled with sunshine by the long lines of darkness cast by the figures on the snow. The "Hampton Court," in the England series, is another very striking instance. In fact, the general system of execution observable in all Turner's drawings, is to work his ground richly and fully, sometimes stippling, and giving infinity of delicate, mysterious, and ceaseless detail; and on the ground so prepared to cast his shadows with one dash of the brush, leaving an excessively sharp edge of watery colour. Such at least is commonly the case in such coarse and broad instances as those I have above given. Words § 6. The effect of his shadows upon the light. are not accurate enough, nor delicate enough to express or trace the constant, all-pervading influence of the finer and vaguer shadows throughout his works, that thrilling influence which gives to the light they leave, its passion and its power. There is not a stone, not a leaf, not a cloud, over which light is not felt to be actually passing and palpitating before our eyes. There is the motion, the actual wave and radiation of the darted beam — not the dull universal daylight, which falls on the landscape without life, or direction, or speculation, equal on all things and dead on all things; but the breathing, animated, exulting light, which feels, and receives, and rejoices, and acts—which chooses one thing and rejects another—which seeks, and finds, and loses again—leaping from rock to rock,

from leaf to leaf, from wave to wave,—glowing, or flashing, or scintillating, according to what it strikes, or in its holier moods, absorbing and enfolding all things in the deep fullness of its repose, and then again losing itself in bewilderment, and doubt, and dimness; or perishing and passing away, entangled in drifting mist, or melted into melancholy air, but still,—kindling or declining, sparkling or still, it is the living light, which breathes in its deepest, most entranced rest, which sleeps, but never dies.

§ 7. The distinction holds good between almost all the works of the ancient and modern schools.

I need scarcely insist farther on the marked distinction between the works of the old masters and those of the great modern landscape-painters in this respect. It is one which the reader can perfectly well work out for himself, by the slightest systematic attention,—one which he will find existing, not merely between this work and that, but throughout the whole body of their productions, and down to every leaf and line. And a little careful watching of nature, especially in her foliage and foregrounds, and comparison of her with Claude, Gaspar Poussin, and Salvator, will soon show him that those artists worked entirely on conventional principles, not representing what they saw, but what they thought would make a handsome picture; and even when they went to nature, which I believe to have been a very much rarer practice with them than their biographers would have us suppose, they copied her like children, drawing what they knew to be there, but not what they saw there.* I believe you may search the foregrounds of Claude, from one end of Europe to another, and you will not find the shadow of one leaf cast upon another. You will find leaf after leaf painted more or less boldly or brightly out of the black ground, and you will find dark leaves defined in perfect form upon the light; but you will not find the form of a single leaf disguised or interrupted by the shadow of another. And Poussin

* Compare Sect. II. Chap. II. § 6.

and Salvator are still further from anything like genuine truth. There is nothing in their pictures which might not be manufactured in their painting-room, with a branch or two of brambles and a bunch or two of weeds before them, to give them the form of the leaves. And it is refreshing to turn from their ignorant and impotent repetitions of childish conception, to the clear, close, genuine studies of modern artists; for it is not Turner only (though here, as in all other points, the first), who is remarkable for fine and expressive decision of chiaroscuro. Some passages by J. D. Harding are thoroughly admirable in this respect, though this master is getting a little too much into a habit of general keen execution, which prevents the parts which ought to be especially decisive from being felt as such, and which makes his pictures, especially the large ones, look a little thin. But some of his later passages of rock foreground have, taken in the abstract, been beyond all praise, owing to the exquisite forms and firm expressiveness of their shadows. And the chiaroscuro of Stanfield is equally deserving of the most attentive study.

The second point to which I wish at present to direct attention has reference to the *arrangement* of light and shade. It is the constant habit of nature to use both her highest lights and deepest shadows in exceedingly small quantity; always in points, never in masses. She will give a large mass of tender light in sky or water, impressive by its quantity, and a large mass of tender shadow relieved against it, in foliage, or hill, or building; but the light is always subdued if it be extensive—the shadow always feeble if it be broad. She will then fill up all the rest of her picture with middle tints and pale greys of some sort or another, and on this quiet and harmonious whole, she will touch her high lights in spots—the foam of an isolated wave—the sail of a solitary vessel—the flash of the sun from a wet roof—the gleam of a single white-washed cottage—or some

§ 8. Second great principle of chiaroscuro. Both high light and deep shadow are used in equal quantity, and only in points.

such sources of local brilliancy, she will use so vividly and delicately as to throw everything else into definite shade by comparison. And then taking up the gloom, she will use the black hollows of some overhanging bank, or the black dress of some shaded figure, or the depth of some sunless chink of wall or window, so sharply as to throw everything else into definite light by comparison; thus reducing the whole mass of her picture to a delicate middle tint, approaching, of course, here to light, and there to gloom; but yet sharply separated from the utmost degrees either of the one or the other.

§ 9. Neglect or contradiction of this principle by writers on art.

Now it is a curious thing that none of our writers on art seem to have noticed the great principle of nature in this respect. They all talk of deep shadow as a thing that may be given in quantity,—one fourth of the picture, or, in certain effects, much more. Barry, for instance, says that the practice of the great painters, who “best understood the effects of chiaroscuro,” was, for the most part, to make the mass of middle tint larger than the light, and the mass of dark larger than the masses of light and middle tint together, *i. e.*, occupying more than one half of the picture. Now I do not know what we are to suppose is meant by “understanding chiaroscuro.” If it means being able to paint lanterns and candles, the principle here laid down is indeed exceedingly correct; or, if it means being able to manufacture agreeable patterns in the shape of pyramids, and crosses, and zigzags, into which arms and legs are to be persuaded, and passion and motion arranged, for the promotion and encouragement of the cant of criticism, such a principle may be productive of the most advantageous results. But if it means, being acquainted with the deep, perpetual, systematic, unintrusive simplicity and unwearied variety of nature’s chiaroscuro—if it means the perception that blackness and sublimity are not synonymous, and that space and light may possibly be coadjutors—then no man, who ever advocated or dreamed of

such a principle, is anything more than a novice, blunderer, and trickster in chiaroscuro. And my firm belief is, that though colour is inveighed against by all artists, as the great Circe of art—the great transformer of mind into sensuality—no fondness for it, no study of it, is half so great a peril and stumbling-block to the young student, as the admiration he hears bestowed on such artificial, false, and juggling chiaroscuro, and the instruction he receives, based on such principles as that given us by Fuseli—that “mere natural light and shade, however separately or individually true, is not always legitimate chiaroscuro in art.” It may not always be *agreeable* to a sophisticated, unfeeling, and perverted mind; but the student had better throw up his art at once, than proceed on the conviction that any other can ever be *legitimate*. I believe I shall be perfectly well able to prove, in following parts of the work, that “mere natural light and shade” is the only fit and faithful attendant of the highest art; and that all tricks—all visible, intended arrangement—all extended shadows and narrow lights—everything, in fact, in the least degree artificial, or tending to make the mind dwell upon light and shade as such, is an injury, instead of an aid, to conceptions of high ideal dignity. I believe I shall be able also to show, that nature manages her chiaroscuro a great deal more neatly and cleverly than people fancy;—that “mere natural light and shade” is a very much finer thing than most artists can put together, and that none think they can improve upon it but those who never understood it.

But however this may be, it is beyond dispute that every permission given to the student to amuse himself with painting one figure all black, and the next all white, and throwing them out with a background of nothing—every permission given to him to spoil his pocket-book with sixths of sunshine and sevenths of shade, and other such fractional sublimities, is so much

§ 10. And consequent misguiding of the student.

§ 11. The great value of a simple chiaroscuro.

more difficulty laid in the way of his ever becoming a master; and that none are in the right road to real excellence, but those who are struggling to render the simplicity, purity, and inexhaustible variety of nature's own chiaroscuro in open, cloudless daylight, giving the expanse of harmonious light—the speaking, decisive shadow—and the exquisite grace, tenderness, and grandeur of aërial opposition of local colour and equally illuminated lines. No chiaroscuro is so difficult as this; and none so noble, chaste, or impressive. On this part of the subject, however, I must not enlarge at present. I wish now only to speak of those great principles of chiaroscuro, which nature observes, even when she is most working for effect—when she is playing with thunderclouds and sunbeams, and throwing one thing out and obscuring another, with the most marked artistical feeling and intention;—even then, she never forgets her great rule, to give precisely the same quantity of deepest shade which she does of highest light, and no more; points of the one answering to points of the other, and both vividly conspicuous and separated from all the rest of the landscape.

§ 12. The sharp separation of nature's lights from her middle tint.

And it is most singular that this separation, which is the great source of brilliancy in nature, should not only be unobserved, but absolutely forbidden by our great writers on art, who are always talking about connecting the light with the shade by *imperceptible gradations*. Now so surely as this is done, all sunshine is lost, for imperceptible gradation from light to dark is the characteristic of objects seen out of sunshine, in what is, in landscape, shadow. Nature's principle of getting light is the direct reverse. She will cover her whole landscape with middle tint, in which she will have as many gradations as you please, and a great many more than you can paint; but on this middle tint she touches her extreme lights, and extreme darks, isolated and sharp, so that the eye goes to them

directly, and feels them to be key-notes of the whole composition. And although the dark touches are less attractive than the light ones, it is not because they are less distinct, but because they exhibit nothing; while the bright touches are in parts where every thing is seen, and where in consequence the eye goes to rest. But yet the high lights do not exhibit anything in themselves, they are too bright and dazzle the eye; and having no shadows in them, cannot exhibit form, for form can only be seen by shadow of some kind or another. Hence the highest lights and deepest darks agree in this, that nothing is seen in either of them; that both are in exceedingly small quantity, and both are marked and distinct from the middle tones of the landscape—the one by their brilliancy, the other by their sharp edges, even though many of the more energetic middle tints may approach their intensity very closely.

Now observe how totally the old masters lost truth in this respect by their vicious trickery in trying to gain tone. They were glad enough to isolate their lights, indeed; but they did even this artificially, joining them imperceptibly, as Reynolds says, with the shadows, and so representing, not a point of illuminated objects on which light strikes and is gone, but a lantern in the picture, spreading rays around it, and out of it. And then to gain the deceptive relief of material objects against extended lights, as noticed in Chap. I. of this Section, § 4, they were compelled to give vast spaces of deep shadow, and so entirely lost the power of giving the points of darkness. Thus the whole balance of every one of their pictures is totally destroyed, and their composition as thoroughly false in chiaroscuro, as if they had given us no shade at all, because one member, and that the most important of the shadows of the landscape, is totally omitted. Take the Berghem, No. 132, Dulwich Gallery, which is a

§ 13. General falsehood of the old masters in this respect.

most studied piece of chiaroscuro. Here we have the light isolated with a vengeance! Looking at it from the opposite side of the room we fancy it must be the representation of some experiment with the oxy-hydrogen microscope; and it is with no small astonishment that we find on closer approach, that all the radiance proceeds from a cow's head! Mithra may well be inimical to Taurus, if his occupation is to be taken out of his hands in this way! If cattle heads are to be thus phosphorescent, we shall be able to do without the sun altogether!

But even supposing that this were a true representation of a point of light, where are our points of darkness? The whole picture, wall, figures, and ground, is one mass of deep shade, through which the details are indeed marvellously given when we look close, but which totally precludes all possibility of giving a single point or key-note of shade. Now nature, just as far as she raised the white cow's head above all the middle tint in light, would have put some black cow's head, or hole in the wall, or dark piece of dress—something, it matters not what—below all the middle tint in darkness,—just as violent and just as conspicuous in shade, as the head is violent and conspicuous in light. Consequently, Berghem has given us only two members of the system of chiaroscuro, of which nature has appointed that there shall always be three.

§ 14. Excellence of the chiaroscuro of M. Angelo, P. Veronese, and Rubens.

I have chosen this picture for illustration, because it is a very clever and careful work by a master, not, in his ordinary works, viciously disposed to tricks of chiaroscuro. But it must be evident to the reader that in the same way, and in a far greater degree, those masters are false who are commonly held up as the great examples of management of chiaroscuro. All erred, exactly in proportion as they plunged with greater ardour into the jack-a-lantern chase. Rembrandt most fatally and constantly; and (of course I speak of quantity, not

of quality of shade) next to him, Correggio; while the Florentines and Romans kept right just because they cared little about the matter, and kept their light and shade in due subordination to higher truths of art. Thus Michael Angelo's chiaroscuro is, perhaps, the most just, perfect, unaffected, and impressive, existing. Raffaello's early works are often very truthful in quantity, though not in management,—the Transfiguration totally wrong. The frescos of the Vatican, before their blues gave way, must have been very perfect. But Cagliari, and Rubens in his finest works, are the only two examples of the unison of perfect chiaroscuro with perfect colour. We have no lantern-lights in their works, all is kept chaste, and shed equally from the sky, not radiating from the object; and we have invariably some energetic bit of black, or intense point of gloom, commonly opposed to yellow to make it more conspicuous, as far below all the rest of the picture as the most brilliant lights are above it.

Among the landscape painters, Cuyp is very often right; Claude sometimes, by accident, as in the Sea-port, No. 14 in our own Gallery, where the blue stooping figure is a beautifully placed key-note of gloom. Both the Poussins, Salvator, and our own Wilson, are always wrong, except in such few effects of twilight as would, even in reality, reduce the earth and sky to two broad equalized masses of shade and light. I do not name particular works, because if the facts I have above stated be once believed, or proved, as they may be, by the slightest observation, their application is easy, and the error or truth of works self-evident.

And therefore I need scarcely do more than tell you to glance at any one of the works of Turner, and you will perceive in a moment the exquisite observation of all these principles; the sharpness, decision, conspicuousness, and excessively small quantity, both of extreme light and extreme shade, all the mass of the picture

§ 15. Errors of the landscape painters.

§ 16. The truth of Turner.

being graduated and delicate middle tint. Take up the Rivers of France, for instance, and turn over a few of the plates in succession.

1. "Chateau Gaillard" (vignette).—Black figures and boats, points of shade; sun-touches on castle, and wake of boat, of light. See how the eye rests on both, and observe how sharp and separate all the lights are, falling in spots, edged by shadow, but not melting off into it.

2. "Orleans."—The crowded figures supply both points of shade and light. Observe the delicate middle tint of both in the whole mass of buildings, and compare this with the blackness of Canaletti's shadows, against which neither figures nor anything else can ever tell, as points of shade.

3. "Blois."—White figures in boats, buttresses of bridge, dome of church on the right, for light; woman on horseback, heads of boats, for shadow. Note especially the isolation of the light on the church dome.

4. "Chateau de Blois."—Torches and white figures for light, roof of chapel and monks' dresses for shade.

5. "Beaugency."—Sails and spire opposed to buoy and boats. An exquisite instance of brilliant, sparkling, isolated touches of morning light.

6. "Amboise."—White sail and clouds; cypresses under castle.

7. "Chateau of Amboise."—The boat in the centre, with its reflections, needs no comment. Note the glancing lights under the bridge. This is a very glorious and perfect instance.

8. "St. Julien," Tours.—Especially remarkable for its preservation of deep points of gloom, because the whole picture is one of extended shade.

I need scarcely go on. The above instances are taken as they happen to come, without selection. The reader can proceed for himself. I may, however, name a few cases of chiaroscuro more especially deserving of

his study. "Scene between Quilleboeuf and Villequier,"—"Honfleur,"—"Light Towers of the Héve,"—"On the Seine between Mantes and Vernon,"—"The Lantern at St. Cloud,"—"Confluence of Seine and Marne,"—"Troyes,"—the first and last vignette, and those at pages 36, 63, 95, 184, 192, 203, of Rogers's poems; the first and second in Campbell, "St. Maurice" in the Italy, where note the black stork; Brienne, Skiddaw, Mayburgh, Melrose, Jedburgh, in the illustrations to Scott, and the vignettes to Milton, not because these are one whit superior to others of his works, but because the laws of which we have been speaking are more strikingly developed in them, and because they have been well engraved. It is impossible to reason from the larger plates, in which half the chiaroscuro is totally destroyed by the haggling, blackening, and "making out" of the engravers.

Such then are the two great principles by which the chiaroscuro of our greatest modern master differs from that of the more celebrated of the ancients. I need scarcely again point out the farther confirmation resulting from the examination of them, of my assertion that ideas of imitation were incompatible with those of truth. We have now seen that to obtain *one* truth of tone necessary for the purposes of imitation, the old masters were compelled to sacrifice, first, real relation of distances, then truth of colour, and finally, all legitimate chiaroscuro,—sacrifices which, however little they may be felt by superficial observers, will yet prevent the real lover of nature from having the slightest pleasure in their works, while our great modern landscape painter, scorning all deceptive imitation, states boldly the truths which are in his power, and trusts for admiration, not to the ill regulated feelings, which are offended because his statement must be imperfect, but to the disciplined intellect, which rejoices in it for being true.

§ 17. Recapitulation.

CHAPTER IV.

OF TRUTH OF SPACE :—FIRST, AS DEPENDENT ON THE
FOCUS OF THE EYE.

§ 1. Space is more clearly indicated by the drawing of objects than by their hue.

IN the first chapter of this section, I noticed the distinction between real aërial perspective, and that overcharged contrast of light and shade by which the old masters obtained their deceptive effect; and I showed that, though inferior to them in the precise quality or tone of aërial colour, our great modern master is altogether more truthful in the expression of the proportionate relation of all his distances to one another. I am now about to examine those modes of expressing space, both in nature and art by far the most important, which are dependent, not on the relative hues of objects, but on the *drawing* of them: by far the most important, I say, because the most constant and certain; for nature herself is not always aërial. Local effects are frequent which interrupt and violate the laws of aërial tone, and induce strange deception in our ideas of distance. I have often seen the summit of a snowy mountain look nearer than its base, owing to the perfect clearness of the upper air. But the *drawing* of objects, that is to say, the degree in which their details and parts are distinct or confused, is an unfailing and certain criterion of their distance; and if this be rightly rendered in a painting, we shall have genuine truth of space, in spite of many errors in aërial tone, while, if this be neglected,

all space will be destroyed, whatever dexterity of tint may be employed to conceal the defective drawing.

First, then, it is to be noticed, that the eye, like any other lens, must have its focus altered, in order to convey a distinct image of objects at different distances; so that it is totally impossible to see distinctly, at the same moment, two objects, one of which is much farther off than another. Of this, any one may convince himself in an instant. Look at the bars of your window-frame, so as to get a clear image of their lines and form, and you cannot, while your eye is fixed on them, perceive anything but the most indistinct and shadowy images of whatever objects may be visible beyond. But fix your eyes on those objects, so as to see them clearly, and though they are just beyond and apparently beside the window-frame, that frame will only be felt or seen as a vague, flitting, obscure interruption to whatever is perceived beyond it. A little attention directed to this fact will convince every one of its universality, and prove beyond dispute that objects at unequal distances cannot be seen together; not from the intervention of air or mist, but from the impossibility of the rays proceeding from both, converging to the same focus, so that the whole impression, either of one or the other, must necessarily be confused, indistinct, and inadequate.

But, be it observed (and I have only to request that whatever I say may be tested by immediate experiment), the difference of focus necessary is greatest within the first five hundred yards, and therefore, though it is totally impossible to see an object ten yards from the eye, and one a quarter of a mile beyond it, at the same moment, it is perfectly possible to see one a quarter of a mile off, and one five miles beyond it, at the same moment. The consequence of this is, practically, that in a real landscape, we can see the whole of what would be called the middle distance and distance together, with facility and clearness; but while we do so, we can see

§ 2. It is impossible to see objects at unequal distances distinctly at one moment.

§ 3. Especially such as are both comparatively near.

nothing in the foreground beyond a vague and indistinct arrangement of lines and colours; and that if, on the contrary, we look at any foreground object, so as to receive a distinct impression of it, the distance and middle distance become all disorder and mystery.

§ 4. In painting, therefore, either the foreground or distance must be partially sacrificed.

And therefore, if in a painting our foreground is anything, our distance must be nothing, and *vice versa*; for if we represent our near and distant objects as giving both at once that distinct image to the eye, which we receive in nature from each, when we look at them separately;* and if we distinguish them from each other only by the air-tone, and indistinctness dependant on positive distance, we violate one of the most essential principles of nature, we represent that as seen at once which can only be seen by two separate acts of seeing, and tell a falsehood as gross as if we had represented four sides of a cubic object visible together.

§ 5. Which not being done by the old masters, they could not express space.

Now, to this fact and principle, no landscape painter of the old school, as far as I remember, ever paid the slightest attention. Finishing their foregrounds clearly and sharply, and with vigorous impression on the eye, giving even the leaves of their bushes and grass with perfect edge and shape, they proceeded into the distance with equal attention to what they could see of its

* This incapacity of the eye must not be confounded with its inability to comprehend a large portion of *lateral* space at once. We indeed can see, at any one moment, little more than one point, the objects beside it being confused and indistinct; but we need pay no attention to this in art, because we can see just as little of the picture as we can of the landscape without turning the eye; and hence any slurring or confusing of one part of it, laterally, more than another, is not founded on any truth of nature, but is an expedient of the artist—and often an excellent and desirable one—to make the eye rest when he wishes it. But as the touch expressive of a distant object is as near upon the canvass as that expressive of a near one, both are seen distinctly and with the same focus of the eye, and hence an immediate contradiction of nature results, unless one or other be given with an artificial and increased indistinctness, expressive of the appearance peculiar to the unadapted focus.

details—they gave all that the eye can perceive in a distance, when it is fully and entirely devoted to it, and therefore, though masters of ærial tone, though employing every expedient that art could supply to conceal the intersection of lines, though caricaturing the force and shadow of near objects to throw them close upon the eye, they *never* succeeded in truly representing space. And that they did not, must be felt by every observer in cases where varied forms of sky or distance join with near foliage or foreground, when, though the near leaves may be made almost black for force, and the encountering sky or hills toned into the most exquisite purity of atmosphere, nothing can prevent the eye from feeling the intersection and junction of the lines, and an inextricable confusion of parts, which I have sometimes heard critics expatiating upon as harmony of composition and unity of arrangement, when, in fact, it is destruction of space. Some exceptions occur when the background has been considered of small importance, and has been laid in merely to set off near objects; and often very beautiful exceptions in the bits of landscape thrown in by great masters as the backgrounds to their historical pictures, usually a thousand times better than the laboured efforts of the real landscape painters.* But only Rubens affords

§ 6. Exception
in the land-
scapes of
Rubens.

* It is particularly interesting to observe the difference between the landscape of Nicholas Poussin when it is a background and when it is a picture, not with reference to the point at present under discussion, but to general grandeur and truth of conception. When it is a background, it almost draws us away from the figures; when it is a picture, we should be glad of some figures to draw us away from it. His backgrounds are full of light, pure in conception, majestic in outline, graceful in detail, and in every way instructive and delightful—take No. 295 in the Dulwich Gallery for instance. But his landscapes sometimes sink almost as low as Gaspar's, and are lightless, conventional, false, and feeble—only just less so than those of the professed landscape painters, and that is saying little enough for them.

principle in entire landscape. The distance of his picture of his own villa, in the National Gallery, is no small nor unimportant part of the composition; the chief light and colour of the picture are dedicated to it. But Rubens felt that, after giving the very botany and ornithology of his foreground, he could not maintain equal decision, nor truthfully give one determined outline in the distance. Nor is there one; all is indistinct, and confused, and mingling, though every thing, and an infinity of things, too, is told; and if any person will take the trouble to keep his eye on this distance for ten minutes, and then turn to any other landscape in the room, he will feel them flat, crude, cutting, and destitute of space and light. Titian, Claude, or Poussin, it matters not, however scientifically opposed in colour, however exquisitely mellowed and removed in tone, however vigorously relieved with violent shade, all will look flat canvass beside this truthful, melting, abundant, limitless distance of Rubens. But it was reserved for modern art to take even a bolder step in the pursuit of truth. To sink the distance for the foreground was comparatively easy; but it implied the partial destruction of exactly that part of the landscape which is most interesting, most dignified, and most varied; of all in fact, except the mere leafage and stone under the spectator's feet. Turner introduced a new era in landscape art, by showing that the foreground might be sunk for the distance, and that it was possible to express immediate proximity to the spectator, without giving anything like completeness to the forms of the near objects. This is not done by slurred or soft lines, observe, (always the sign of vice in art*), but by a

§ 7. But modern artists have succeeded in fully carrying out this principle.

* That is to say, if they are systematically and constantly used. Soft and melting lines are necessary in some places, as, for instance, in the important and striking parts of the outline of an object which turns gradually, so as to have a large flat surface under the eye just when it becomes relieved against space, and so wherever thick mist is to be

decisive imperfection, a firm, but partial assertion of form, which the eye feels indeed to be close home to it, and yet cannot rest upon, nor cling to, nor entirely understand, and from which it is driven away of necessity, to those parts of distance on which it is intended to repose. And this principle, originated by Turner, though fully carried out by him only, has yet been acted on with judgment and success by several less powerful artists of the English school. Some six years ago, the brown moorland foregrounds of Copley Fielding were very instructive in this respect. Not a line in them was made out, not a single object clearly distinguishable. Wet broad sweeps of the brush, sparkling, careless, and accidental as nature herself, always truthful as far as they went, implying knowledge, though not expressing it, suggested everything, while they represented nothing. But far off into the mountain distance came the sharp edge and the delicate form; the whole intention and execution of the picture being guided and exerted where the great impression of space and size was to be given. The spectator was compelled to go forward into the waste of hills—there, where the sun broke wide upon the moor, he must walk and wander—he could not stumble and hesitate over the near rocks, nor stop to botanize on the first inches of his path. And the impression of these pictures was always great

expressed, or very intense light; but in general, and as a principle of art, lines ought to be made tender by graduation and change as they proceed, not by slurring. The hardest line in the world will not be painful, if it be managed as nature manages it, by pronouncing one part and losing another, and keeping the whole in a perpetual state of transition. Michael Angelo's lines are as near perfection as mortal work can be; distinguished, on the one hand, from the hardness and sharpness of Perugino and the early Italians, but far more, on the other, from the vicious slurring and softness which Murillo falls into when he wishes to be fine. A hard line is only an imperfection, but a slurred one is commonly a falsehood. The artist whose fault is hardness *may* be on the road to excellence—he whose fault is softness *must* be on the road to ruin.

and enduring, as it was simple and truthful. I do not know any thing in art which has expressed more completely the force and feeling of nature in these particular scenes. And it is a farther illustration of the principle we are insisting upon, that where, as in some of his later works, he has bestowed more labour on the foreground and designed it more completely, the picture has lost both in space and sublimity. And among artists in general, who are either not aware of the principle, or fear to act upon it (for it requires no small courage, as well as skill, to treat a foreground with that indistinctness and mystery which they have been accustomed to consider as characteristic of distance), the foreground is not only felt, as every landscape painter will confess, to be the most embarrassing and unmanageable part of the picture, but, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, will go near to destroy the effect of the rest of the composition. Thus Callcott's magnificent "Trent" (perhaps the best picture, on the whole, he has ever painted), is severely injured by the harsh group of foreground figures; and Stanfield very rarely gets through an Academy picture without destroying much of its space, by too much determination of near form; while Harding constantly sacrifices his distance, and compels the spectator to dwell on the foreground altogether, though indeed, with such foregrounds as he gives us, we are most happy so to do. But it is in Turner only that we see a bold and decisive choice of the distance and middle distance, as his great object of attention; and by him only that the foreground is united and adapted to it, not by any want of drawing, or coarseness, or carelessness of execution, but by the most precise and beautiful indication or suggestion of just so much of even the minutest forms as the eye can see when its focus is not adapted to them. And herein is another reason for the vigour and wholeness of the effect of Turner's works at any dis-

§ 8. Especially
of Turner.

tance; while those of almost all other artists are sure to lose space as soon as we lose sight of the details.

And now we see the reason for the singular, and to the ignorant in art, the offensive execution of Turner's figures. I do not mean to assert that there is any reason whatsoever, for *bad* drawing (though in landscape it matters exceedingly little); but that there is both reason and necessity for that *want* of drawing which gives even the nearest figures round balls with four pink spots in them instead of faces, and four dashes of the brush instead of hands and feet; for it is totally impossible that if the eye be adapted to receive the rays proceeding from the utmost distance, and some partial impression from all the distances, it should be capable of perceiving more of the forms and features of near figures than Turner gives. And how absolutely necessary to the faithful representation of space this indecision really is, might be proved with the utmost ease by any one who had veneration enough for the artist to sacrifice one of his pictures to his fame; who would take some one of his works in which the figures were most incomplete, and have them painted in by Goodall, or any of our delicate and first-rate figure painters, absolutely preserving every colour and shade of Turner's group, so as not to lose one atom of the composition, but giving eyes for the pink spots, and feet for the white ones. Let the picture be so exhibited in the Academy, and even novices in art would feel at a glance that its truth of space was gone, that every one of its beauties and harmonies had undergone decomposition, that it was now a grammatical solecism, a painting of impossibilities, a thing to torture the eye, and offend the mind.

The laborious completeness of the figures and foregrounds of the old masters, then, far from being a source of distance and space, is evidently destructive of

§ 9. Justification of the want of drawing in Turner's figures.

both. It may perhaps be desirable on other grounds; it may be beautiful and necessary to the ideal of landscape. I assert at present nothing to the contrary; I assert merely, that it is mathematically demonstrable to be untrue.

CHAPTER V.

OF TRUTH OF SPACE:—SECONDLY, AS ITS APPEARANCE
IS DEPENDENT ON THE POWER OF THE EYE.

In the last chapter, we have seen how indistinctness of individual distances becomes necessary in order to express the adaptation of the eye to one or other of them; we have now to examine that kind of indistinctness which is dependent on real retirement of the object even when the focus of the eye is fully concentrated upon it. The first kind of indecision is that which belongs to all objects which the eye is not adapted to, whether near or far off: the second is that consequent upon the want of power in the eye to receive a clear image of objects at a great distance from it, however attentively it may regard them.

§ 1. The peculiar indistinctness dependent on the retirement of objects from the eye.

Draw on a piece of white paper, a square and a circle, each about a twelfth or eighth of an inch in diameter, and blacken them so that their forms may be very distinct; place your paper against the wall at the end of the room, and retire from it a greater or less distance according as you have drawn the figures larger or smaller. You will come to a point where, though you can see both the spots with perfect plainness, you cannot tell which is the square and which the circle.

Now this takes place of course with every object in a landscape, in proportion to its distance and size. The definite forms of the leaves of a tree, however sharply and separately they may appear to come against the

§ 2. Causes confusion, but not annihilation of details.

sky, are quite indistinguishable at fifty yards off, and the form of everything becomes confused before we finally lose sight of it. Now if the character of an object, say the front of a house, be explained by a variety of forms in it, as the shadows in the tops of the windows, the lines of the architraves, the seams of the masonry, &c.; these lesser details, as the object falls into distance, become confused and undecided, each of them losing their definite forms, but all being perfectly visible as something, a white or a dark spot or stroke, not lost sight of, observe, but yet so seen that we cannot tell what they are. As the distance increases, the confusion becomes greater, until at last the whole front of the house becomes merely a flat, pale space, in which, however, there is still observable a kind of richness and chequering, caused by the details in it, which, though totally merged and lost in the mass, have still an influence on the texture of that mass, until at last the whole house itself becomes a mere light or dark spot which we can plainly see, but cannot tell what it is, nor distinguish it from a stone or any other object.

§ 3. Instances
in various ob-
jects.

Now what I particularly wish to insist upon, is the state of vision in which all the details of an object are seen, and yet seen in such confusion and disorder that we cannot in the least tell what they are, or what they mean. It is not mist between us and the object, still less is it shade, still less is it want of character; it is a confusion, a mystery, an interfering of undecided lines with each other, not a diminution of their number; window and door, architrave and frieze, all are there; it is no cold and vacant mass, it is full and rich and abundant, and yet you cannot see a single form so as to know what it is. Observe your friend's face as he is coming up to you; first it is nothing more than a white spot; now it is a face, but you cannot see the two eyes, nor the mouth, even as spots; you see a confusion of lines, a something which you know from

experience to be indicative of a face, and yet you cannot tell how. Now he is nearer, and you can see the spots for the eyes and mouth, but they are not blank spots neither; there is detail in them; you cannot see the lips nor the teeth, nor the brows, and yet you see more than mere spots; it is a mouth and an eye, and there is light and sparkle and expression in them, but nothing distinct. Now he is nearer still, and you can see that he is like your friend, but you cannot tell whether he is or not; there is a vagueness and indecision of line still. Now you are sure, but even yet there are a thousand things in his face which have their effect in inducing the recognition, but which you cannot see so as to know what they are.

Changes like these, and states of vision corresponding to them, take place with each and all of the objects of nature, and two great principles of truth are deducible from their observation. First, place an object as close to the eye as you like, there is always something in it which you *cannot* see, except in the hinted and mysterious manner above described. You can see the texture of a piece of dress, but you cannot see the individual threads which compose it, though they are all felt, and have each of them influence on the eye. Secondly, place an object as far from the eye as you like, and until it becomes itself a mere spot, there is always something in it which you *can* see, though only in the hinted manner above described. Its shadows and lines and local colours are not lost sight of as it retires, they get mixed and indistinguishable, but they are still there, and there is a difference always perceivable between an object possessing such details and a flat or vacant space. The grass blades of a meadow a mile off, are so far discernible that there will be a marked difference between its appearance and that of a piece of wood painted green. And thus nature is never distinct and never vacant, she is always mysterious,

§ 4. Two great resultant truths; that nature is never distinct, and never vacant.

but always abundant, you always see something but you never see all.

And thus arises that exquisite finish and fulness which God has appointed to be the perpetual source of fresh pleasure to the cultivated and observant eye,—a finish which no distance can render invisible, and no nearness comprehensible, which in every stone, every bough, every cloud, and every wave is multiplied around us, for ever presented, and for ever exhaustless. And hence in art, every space or touch in which we can see everything, or in which we can see nothing, is false. Nothing can be true which is either complete or vacant; every touch is false which does not suggest more than it represents, and every space is false which represents nothing.

§ 5. Complete violation of both these principles by the old masters. They are either distinct or vacant.

Now, I would not wish for any more illustrative or marked examples of the total contradiction of these two great principles, than the landscape works of the old masters, taken as a body:—the Dutch masters furnishing the cases of seeing everything, and the Italians of seeing nothing. The rule with both is indeed the same, differently applied. “You shall see the bricks in the wall, and be able to count them, or you shall see nothing but a dead flat;” but the Dutch give you the bricks, and the Italians the flat. Nature’s rule being the precise reverse—“You shall never be able to count the bricks, but you shall never see a dead space.”

§ 6. Instances from Nicholas Poussin.

Take, for instance, the street in the centre of the really great landscape of Poussin (great in feeling at least) marked 260 in the Dulwich Gallery. The houses are dead square masses, with a light side and a dark side, and black touches for windows. The light side is blank, No. 1, the dark side is blank, No. 2, and the windows are blanks, Nos. 3, 4, 5. There is not a shadow of a suggestion of anything whatsoever in either of the spaces, the light wall is dead grey, with no change in it, the dark wall dead grey, with no change in it, and

the windows dead black, with no change in it. How differently would nature have treated you. She would have let you see the Indian corn hanging on the walls, and the image of the Virgin at the angles, and the sharp, broken, broad shadows of the tiled eaves, and the deep ribbed tiles with the doves upon them, and the carved Roman capital built into the wall, and the white and blue stripes of the mattresses stuffed out of the windows, and the flapping corners of the mat blinds. All would have been there; not as such, not like corn, nor blinds, nor tiles, not to be comprehended nor understood, but a confusion of yellow and black spots and strokes, carried far too fine for the eye to follow, microscopic in its minuteness, and filling every atom and part of space with mystery, out of which would have arranged itself the general impression of truth and life.

Again, take the distant city on the right bank of the river in Claude's "Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca," in the National Gallery. Now, I have seen a good many cities in my life, and drawn not a few; and I have seen a good many fortifications, fancy ones included, which frequently supply us with very new ideas indeed, especially in matters of proportion; but I do not remember ever having met with either a city or a fortress *entirely* composed of round towers of various heights and sizes, all facsimiles of each other, and absolutely agreeing in the number of battlements. I have, indeed, some faint recollection of having delineated such an one in the first page of a spelling-book when I was four years old, but, somehow or other, the dignity and perfection of the ideal was not appreciated, and I do not think the volume was considered to be increased in value by the frontispiece. Without, however, venturing to doubt the entire sublimity of the same ideal as it occurs in Claude, let us consider how nature, if she had been fortunate enough to originate so perfect a conception, would have managed it in its

§7. From
Claude.

details. Claude has permitted you to see every battlement, and the first impulse you feel upon looking at the picture is to count how many there are. Nature would have given you a peculiar confused roughness of the upper lines, a multitude of intersections and spots, which you would have known from experience was indicative of battlements, but which you might as well have thought of creating as of counting. Claude has given you the walls below in one dead void of uniform grey. There is nothing to be seen, nor felt, nor guessed at in it; it is grey paint or grey shade, whichever you may choose to call it, but it is nothing more. Nature would have let you see, nay, would have compelled you to see, thousands of spots and lines, not one to be absolutely understood or accounted for, but yet all characteristic and different from each other; breaking lights on shattered stones, vague shadows from waving vegetation, irregular stains of time and weather, mouldering hollows, sparkling casements—all would have been there—none, indeed, seen as such, none comprehensible or like themselves, but all visible; little shadows and sparkles, and scratches, making that whole space of colour a transparent, palpitating, various infinity.

§ 8. And
G. Poussin.

Or take one of Poussin's extreme distances, such as that in the "Sacrifice of Isaac." It is luminous, retiring, delicate and perfect in tone, and is quite complete enough to deceive and delight the careless eye to which all distances are alike; nay, it is perfect and masterly, and absolutely right, if we consider it as a sketch,—as a first plan of a distance, afterwards to be carried out in detail. But we must remember that all these alternate spaces of grey and gold are not the landscape itself, but the treatment of it—not its substance, but its light and shade. They are just what nature would cast over it, and write upon it with every cloud, but which she would cast in play, and without carefulness, as

matters of the very smallest possible importance. All her work and her attention would be given to bring out from underneath this, and through this, the forms and the material character which this can only be valuable to illustrate, not to conceal. Every one of those broad spaces she would linger over in protracted delight, teaching you fresh lessons in every hair's-breadth of it, and pouring her fulness of invention into it, until the mind lost itself in following her,—now fringing the dark edge of the shadow with a tufted line of level forest—now losing it for an instant in a breath of mist—then breaking it with the white gleaming angle of a narrow brook—then dwelling upon it again in a gentle, mounded, melting undulation, over the other side of which she would carry you down into a dusty space of soft, crowded light, with the hedges, and the paths, and the sprinkled cottages and scattered trees mixed up and mingled together in one beautiful, delicate, impenetrable mystery—sparkling and melting, and passing away into the sky, without one line of distinctness, or one instant of vacancy.

Now it is, indeed, impossible for the painter to follow all this—he cannot come up to the same degree and order of infinity—but he can give us a lesser kind of infinity. He has not one-thousandth part of the space to occupy which nature has; but he can, at least, leave no part of that space vacant and unprofitable. If nature carries out her minutiae over miles, he has no excuse for generalizing in inches. And if he will only give us all he can, if he will give us a fulness as complete and as mysterious as nature's, we will pardon him for its being the fulness of a cup instead of an ocean. But we will not pardon him, if, because he has not the mile to occupy, he will not occupy the inch, and because he has fewer means at his command, will leave half of those in his power unexerted. Still less will we pardon him for mistaking the sport of nature for her

§ 9. The imperative necessity, in landscape painting, of fulness and finish.

labour, and for following her only in her hour of rest, without observing how she has worked for it. After spending centuries in raising the forest, and guiding the river, and modelling the mountain, she exults over her work in buoyancy of spirit, with playful sunbeam and flying cloud; but the painter must go through the same labour, or he must not have the same recreation. Let him chisel his rock faithfully, and tuft his forest delicately, and then we will allow him his freaks of light and shade, and thank him for them; but we will not be put off with the play before the lesson—with the adjunct instead of the essence—with the illustration instead of the fact.

§ 10. Breadth
is not vacancy.

I am somewhat anticipating my subject here, because I can scarcely help answering the objections which I know must arise in the minds of most readers, especially of those who are *partially* artistical, respecting "generalization," "breadth," "effect," &c. It were to be wished that our writers on art would not dwell so frequently on the necessity of breadth, without explaining what it means; and that we had more constant reference made to the principle which I can only remember having seen once clearly explained and insisted on,—that breadth is not vacancy. Generalization is unity, not destruction of parts; and composition is not annihilation, but arrangement of materials. The breadth which unites the truths of nature with her harmonies, is meritorious and beautiful; but the breadth which annihilates those truths by the million, is not painting nature, but painting over her. And so the masses which result from right concords and relations of details, are sublime and impressive; but the masses which result from the eclipse of details are contemptible and painful.* And we shall show, in following parts of the

* Of course much depends upon the kind of detail so lost. An artist may generalize the trunk of a tree, where he only loses lines of bark and do us a kindness; but he must not generalize the details of a cham-

work, that distances like these of Poussin are mere meaningless tricks of clever execution, which, when once discovered, the artist may repeat over and over again, with mechanical contentment and perfect satisfaction, both to himself and to his superficial admirers, with no more exertion of intellect nor awakening of feeling than any tradesman has in multiplying some ornamental pattern of furniture. Be this as it may, however, (for we cannot enter upon the discussion of the question here,) the falsity and imperfection of such distances admits of no dispute. Beautiful and ideal they may be; true they are not: and in the same way we might go through every part and portion of the works of the old masters, showing throughout, either that you have every leaf and blade of grass staring defiance to the mystery of nature, or that you have dead spaces of absolute vacuity, equally determined in their denial of her fulness. And even if we ever find (as here and there, in their better pictures, we do) changeful passages of agreeable playing colour, or mellow and transparent modulations of mysterious atmosphere, even here the touches, though satisfactory to the eye, are suggestive of nothing,—they are characterless,—they have none of the peculiar expressiveness and meaning by which nature maintains the variety and interest even of what she most conceals. She always tells a story, however hinted and vaguely; each of her touches is different from all the others; and we feel with every one, that though we cannot tell what it is, it cannot be *anything*; while even the most dextrous distances of the old masters pretend to secrecy without having anything to conceal, and are ambiguous, not from the concentration of meaning, but from the want of it.

And now, take up one of Turner's distances, it matters not which, or of what kind,—drawing or painting, § 11. The fulness and mystery of Turner's distances. in which there is a history of creation. The full discussion of the subject belongs to a future part of our investigation.

small or great, done thirty years ago, or for last year's Academy, as you like; say that of the "Mercury and Argus," and look if every fact which I have just been pointing out in nature be not carried out in it. Abundant, beyond the power of the eye to embrace or follow, vast and various, beyond the power of the mind to comprehend, there is yet not one atom in its whole extent and mass which does not suggest more than it represents, nor does it suggest vaguely, but in such a manner as to prove that the conception of each individual inch of that distance is absolutely clear and complete in the master's mind, a separate picture fully worked out: but yet, clearly and fully as the idea is formed, just so much of it is given, and no more, as nature would have allowed you to feel or see, just so much as would enable a spectator of experience and knowledge to understand almost every minute fragment of separate detail, but appears, to the unpractised and careless eye, just what a distance of nature's own would appear, an unintelligible mass. Not one line out of the millions there is without meaning, yet there is not one which is not affected and disguised by the dazzle and indecision of distance. No form is made out, and yet no form is unknown.

§ 12. Farther illustrations in architectural drawing.

Perhaps the absolute truth and accuracy of this system of drawing is better to be understood by observing the distant character of rich architecture, than of any other object. Go to the top of Highgate Hill on a clear summer morning at five o'clock, and look at Westminster Abbey. You will receive an impression of a building enriched with multitudinous vertical lines. Try to distinguish one of those lines all the way down from the one next to it: You cannot. Try to count them: You cannot. Try to make out the beginning or end of any one of them: You cannot. Look at it generally, and it is all symmetry and arrangement. Look at it in its parts, and it is all inex-

tricable confusion. Am not I, at this moment, describing a piece of Turner's drawing, with the same words by which I describe nature? And what would one of the old masters have done with such a building as this in his distance? Either he would only have given the shadows of the buttresses, and the light and dark sides of the two towers, and two dots for the windows, or if more ignorant and more ambitious, he had attempted to render some of the detail, it would have been done by distinct lines,—would have been broad caricature of the delicate building, felt at once to be false, ridiculous, and offensive. His most successful effort would only have given us, through his carefully toned atmosphere, the effect of a colossal parish church, without one line of carving on its economic sides. Turner, and Turner only, would follow and render on the canvass that mystery of decided line,—that distinct, sharp, visible, but unintelligible and inextricable richness, which, examined part by part, is to the eye nothing but confusion and defeat, which, taken as a whole, is all unity, symmetry, and truth.*

Nor is this mode of representation true only with respect to distances. Every object, however near the eye, has something about it which you cannot see, and which brings the mystery of distance into action even in every part and portion of what we suppose ourselves to see most distinctly. Stand in the Piazza di St. Marco, at Venice, as close to the church as you can, without losing sight of the top of it. Look at the capitals of the small columns which form the balustrade on the first story above the round arches. You see that they are exquisitely rich, carved all over. Tell me

§ 13. In near objects as well as distances.

* Vide, for illustration, "Fontainbleau," in the Illustrations to Scott; Vignette at opening of "Human Life," in Rogers' Poems; "Venice," in the Italy; "Chateau de Blois;" the "Rouens" and "Pont Neuf, Paris," in the Rivers of France. The distances of all the Academy pictures of Venice, especially the "Shylock," are most instructive.

§ 14. Vacancy
and falsehood
of Canaletti.

their patterns. You cannot. Tell me the direction of a single line in them. You cannot. Yet you see a multitude of lines, and you have so much feeling of a certain tendency and arrangement in those lines, that you are quite sure the capitals are beautiful, and that they are all different from each other. But I defy you to make out one single line in any one of them. Now go to Canaletti's painting of this church, in the Palazzo Pisani, taken from the very spot on which you stood. How much has he represented of all this? A black dot under each capital for the shadow, and a yellow one for the light. There is not a vestige nor indication of carving or decoration of any sort or kind. Now this may be fine painting perhaps, but it is *not* truth, neither will it ever have the effect of truth upon the mind.

Very different from this, but erring on the other side, is the ordinary drawing of the architect, who gives the principal lines of the design with delicate clearness and precision, but with no uncertainty or mystery about them, which mystery being removed, all space and size are destroyed with it, and we have a drawing of a model, not of a building. But in the capital lying on the foreground in Turner's "Daphne hunting with Leucippus," we have the perfect truth. Not one jag of the acanthus leaves is absolutely visible, the lines are all disorder, but you feel in an instant that all are there. And so it will invariably be found through every portion of detail in his late and most perfect works.

§ 15. Still
greater fulness
and finish in
landscape fore-
grounds.

But if there be this mystery and inexhaustible finish merely in the more delicate instances of architectural decoration, how much more in the ceaseless and incomparable decoration of nature. The detail of a single weedy bank laughs the carving of ages to scorn. Every leaf and stalk has a design and tracery upon it,—every knot of grass an intricacy of shade which the labour of years could never imitate, and which, if such

labour could follow it out even to the last fibres of the leaflets, would yet be falsely represented, for, as in all other cases brought forward, it is not clearly seen, but confusedly and mysteriously. That which is nearness for the bank, is distance for its details; and however near it may be, the greater part of those details are still a beautiful incomprehensibility.

Hence, throughout the picture, the expression of § 16. Space and size are dependent upon obscurity, united with, destroyed alike or rather resultant from, exceeding fulness. We destroy by distinctness both space and size, either by the vacancy, which affords and by vacancy. us no measure of space, or by the distinctness, which gives us a false one. The distance of Poussin, having no indication of trees, nor of meadows, nor of character of any kind, may be fifty miles off, or may be five; we cannot tell—we have no measure, and in consequence, no vivid impression. But a middle distance of Hobbima's involves a contradiction in terms; it states a distance by perspective, which it contradicts by distinctness of detail. Of all errors, therefore, too much making out is the most vicious; because it in fact involves every other kind of error, denying one half of the truths to be stated, while it misrepresents those which it pretends to state. He who pretends to draw all the leaves of an oak, denies five while he expresses three, and expresses those three falsely. He alone who defines none, can suggest all. We shall see hereafter, in examining the qualities § 17. Swift execution best secures perfection of details. of execution, that one of its chiefest attractions is the power of rightly expressing *infinity*; and that the pleasure which we take in the swift strokes of a great master is not so much dependent on the swiftness or decision of them, as on the expression of infinite mystery by the mere breaking, crumbling, or dividing of the touch, which the labour of months could not have reached, if devoted to separate details. One of Landseer's breaking, scratchy touches of light is far more truly expressive of the infinity of hair, than a week's work could make a

painting of particular hairs; and a single dusty roll of Turner's brush is more truly expressive of the infinity of foliage, than the niggling of Hobbima could have rendered his canvass, if he had worked on it till doomsday. And thus, while the mind is kept intent upon wholeness of effect, the hand is far more likely to give faithful images of details, than if mind and hand be both intent on the minutiae. What Sir J. Reynolds says of the misplaced labour of his Roman acquaintance on separate leaves of foliage, and the certainty he expresses that a man who attended to general character would in five minutes produce a more faithful representation of a tree, than the unfortunate mechanist in as many years, is thus perfectly true and well founded; but this is not because details are undesirable, but because they are best given by swift execution, and because individually, they cannot be given at all. But it should be observed (though we shall be better able to insist upon this point in future) that much harm and error has arisen from the supposition and assertions of swift and brilliant historical painters, that the same principles of execution are entirely applicable to landscape, which are right for the figure. The artist who falls much into extreme delicacy of detail in drawing the human form, is apt to become disgusting rather than pleasing. It is more agreeable that a nostril or an ear should be suggested by a single dash of the pencil, than that they should be made out with microscopic accuracy,—more agreeable that the general outline and soft hues of flesh should alone be given, than its hairs, and veins, and lines of intersection. And the most rapid and generalizing expression of the human body, if directed by perfect knowledge, and rigidly faithful in drawing, will commonly omit very little of what is agreeable or impressive; it will lose only what is monotonous and uninteresting, if not disagreeable. But the exclusively generalizing landscape painter omits the whole of what

§ 18. Finish is far more necessary in landscape than in historical subjects.

is valuable in his subject,—omits thoughts, designs, and beauties by the million, everything, indeed, which can furnish him with variety or expression. A distance in Lincolnshire, or in Lombardy, might both be generalised into such blue and yellow stripes as we see in Poussin, but whatever there is of beauty or character in either, depends altogether on our understanding the details, and feeling the difference between the morasses and ditches of the one, and the rolling sea of mulberry trees of the other. And so in every part of the subject, I have no hesitation in asserting that it is *impossible* to go too fine, or think too much about details in landscape, so that they be rightly arranged and rightly massed, but that it is equally impossible to render any thing like the fulness or the space of nature, except by that mystery and obscurity of execution which she herself uses, and in which Turner only has followed her. And thus we have two great classes of error in landscape painting; the first, the attempting to give all details distinctly, which is the error of children, mechanics, and the Dutch school; the second, the omitting details altogether, which is commonly the error of an impetuous, intellectual, but uncultivated mind, and is found in whatever is best of the Italian school. (Claude's foregrounds come under the same category with the Dutch.) Both destroy space and beauty, but the first error is a falsehood, the second only an imperfection.

We have now rapidly glanced at such general truths of nature as can be investigated without much knowledge of what is beautiful. Questions of arrangement, massing, and generalization, I prefer leaving untouched, until we know something about details, and something about what is beautiful. All that is desirable, even in these mere technical and artificial points, is based upon truths and habits of nature; but we cannot understand those truths until we are acquainted with the specific forms and minor details which they affect, or out of

§ 19. Recapitulation of the section.

which they arise. I shall, therefore, proceed to examine the invaluable and essential truths of specific character and form—briefly and imperfectly, indeed, as needs must be, but yet at length sufficient to enable the reader to pursue, if he will, the subject for himself. Let me, however, point back for a moment, to the result of our present examination of general truths. We have found the old masters excel us in one particular quality of colour—probably the result merely of some technical secret, and in one deceptive effect of tone, gained at the expence of a thousand falsehoods and omissions. We have found them false in aerial perspective, false in colour, false in chiaroscuro, false in space, false in detail; and we have found one of our modern artists faithful in every point, and victorious in every struggle, and all of them aiming at the highest class of truths. For which is the most important truth in a painting,—for instance, of St. Mark's at Venice—the exact quality of relief against the sky, which it shares with every hovel and brick-kiln in Italy; or the intricacy of detail and brilliancy of colour which distinguish it from every other building in the world? Or with respect to the street of Poussin, is it of more importance that we should be told the exact pitch of blackness which its chimneys assume against the sky; or that we should perceive the thousands of intricate and various incidents which in nature would have covered every cottage with history of Italian life and character? Our feelings might answer for us in an instant; but let us use our determined tests. The one truth is uncharacteristic, unhistorical, and of the secondary class; the others are characteristic, historical, and of the primary class. How incalculably is the balance already in favour of modern art!

SECTION III.

OF TRUTH OF SKIES.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE OPEN SKY.

It is a strange thing how little in general people know about the sky. It is the part of creation in which nature has done more for the sake of pleasing man, more, for the sole and evident purpose of talking to him and teaching him, than in any other of her works, and it is just the part in which we least attend to her. There are not many of her other works in which some more material or essential purpose than the mere pleasing of man is not answered by every part of their organization; but every essential purpose of the sky might, as far as we know, be answered, if once in three days, or thereabouts, a great, ugly black rain cloud were brought up over the blue, and everything well watered, and so all left blue again till next time, with perhaps a film of morning and evening mist for dew. And instead of this, there is not a moment of any day of our lives, when nature is not producing scene after scene, picture after picture, glory after glory, and working still upon such exquisite and constant principles of the most perfect beauty, that it is quite certain it is all done for us, and intended for our perpetual pleasure. And every man, wherever placed, however far from other

§ 1. The peculiar adaptation of the sky to the pleasing and teaching of man.

sources of interest or of beauty, has this doing for him constantly. The noblest scenes of the earth can be seen and known but by few; it is not intended that man should live always in the midst of them, he injures them by his presence, he ceases to feel them if he be always with them; but the sky is for all; bright as it is, it is not "too bright, nor good, for human nature's daily food," it is fitted in all its functions for the perpetual comfort and exalting of the heart, for the soothing it and purifying it from its dross and dust. Sometimes gentle, sometimes capricious, sometimes awful, never the same for two moments together; almost human in its passions, almost spiritual in its tenderness, almost divine in its infinity, it is surely meant for the chief teacher of what is immortal in us, as it is the chief minister of chastisement or of blessing to what is mortal. And yet we never attend to it, we never make it a subject of thought, but as it has to do with our animal sensations; we look upon all by which it speaks to us more clearly than to brutes, upon all which bears witness to the intention of the Supreme, that we are to receive more from the covering vault than the light and the dew which we share with the weed and the worm, but as a succession of meaningless and monotonous accident, too common and too vain to be worthy of a moment of watchfulness, or a glance of admiration. If in our moments of utter idleness and insipidity, we turn to the sky as a last resource, which of its phenomena do we speak of? One says it has been wet, and another, it has been windy, and another, it has been warm. Who, among the whole chattering crowd, can tell me of the forms and the precipices of the chain of tall white mountains that girded the horizon at noon yesterday? Who saw the narrow sunbeam that came out of the south, and smote upon their summits until they melted and mouldered away in a dust of blue rain? Who saw the dance of the dead clouds when the sun-

§ 2. The carelessness with which its lessons are received.

light left them last night, and the west wind blew them before it like withered leaves? All has passed, unregretted as unseen; or if the apathy be ever shaken off, even for an instant, it is only by what is gross, or what is extraordinary, when the heavens force themselves on our attention with some blaze of fire, or blackness of thunder, or awaken the curiosity of idleness, because the sun looks like a frying-pan, or the moon like a fool.

But it is not in the broad and fierce manifestations of the elemental energies, not in the clash of the hail, nor the drift of the whirlwind, that the highest characters of the sublime are developed. God is not in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still, small voice. They are but the blunt and the low faculties of our nature, which can only be addressed through lamp-black and lightning. It is in quiet and subdued passages of unobtrusive majesty, the deep, and the calm, and the perpetual,—that which must be sought ere it is seen, and loved ere it is understood,—things which the angels work out for us daily, and yet vary eternally, which are never wanting, and never repeated, which are to be found always, yet each found but once; it is through these that the lesson of devotion is chiefly taught, and the blessing of beauty given. These are what the artist of highest aim must study; it is these, by the combination of which his ideal is to be created; these, of which so little notice is ordinarily taken by common observers, that I fully believe, little as people in general are concerned with art, more of their ideas of sky are derived from pictures than from reality, and that if we could examine the conception formed in the minds of most educated persons when we talk of clouds, it would frequently be found composed of fragments of blue and white reminiscences of the old masters, representative of round, cushion-like swellings and protuberances, associated in a very anomalous and unintelligible man-

§ 3. The most essential of these lessons are the gentlest.

§ 4. Many of our ideas of sky altogether conventional.

ner, with legs, arms, and cart wheels; or if this be saying too much, at least the beauty of the natural forms is so little studied, that such representations are received either for truth, or for something better than truth. Whatever there may be in them of the poetical, I believe I shall be able to show that there is a slight violation of the true.

And I shall enter upon the examination of what is true in sky at greater length, because it is the only part of a picture of which all, if they will, may be competent judges. Its other component parts of subject can be open to the criticism of comparatively but few. What I may have to assert respecting the rocks of Salvator, or the boughs of Claude, I can scarcely prove, except to those whom I can immure for a month or two in the fastnesses of the Apennines, or guide in their summer walks again and again through the ravines of Sorrento. But what I say of the sky can be brought to an immediate test by all, and I write the more decisively, in the hope that it may be so.

§ 5. Nature,
and essential
qualities of the
open blue.

Let us begin then with the simple open blue of the sky. This is of course the colour of the pure atmospheric air, not the aqueous vapour, but the pure azote and oxygen, and it is the total colour of the whole mass of that air between us and the void of space. It is modified by the varying quantity of aqueous vapour suspended in it, whose colour, in its most imperfect, and therefore most visible, state of solution, is pure white, (as in steam,) which receives, like any other white, the warm hues of the rays of the sun, and, according to its quantity and imperfect solution, makes the sky paler, and at the same time more or less grey, by mixing warm tones with its blue. This grey aqueous vapour, when very decided, becomes mist, and when local, cloud. Hence the sky is to be considered as a transparent blue liquid, in which, at various elevations, clouds are suspended, those clouds being themselves only par-

ticular visible spaces of a substance with which the whole mass of this liquid is more or less impregnated. Now, we all know this perfectly well, and yet we so far forget it in practice, that we little notice the constant connection kept up by nature between her blue and her clouds, and we are not offended by the constant habit of the old masters, of considering the blue sky as totally distinct in its nature, and far separated from the vapours which float in it. With them, cloud is cloud, and blue is blue, and no kind of connection between them is ever hinted at. The sky is thought of as a clear, high, material dome, the clouds as separate bodies suspended beneath it, and in consequence, however delicate and exquisitely removed in tone their skies may be, you always look *at* them, not *through* them. Now if there be one characteristic of the sky more valuable or necessary to be rendered than another, it is that which Wordsworth has given in the second book of the *Excursion* :

§ 6. Its connection with clouds.

§ 7. Its exceeding depth.

The chasm of sky above my head
Is Heaven's profoundest azure. No domain
For fickle, short-lived clouds, to occupy,
Or to pass through ;—but rather an *abyss*
In which the everlasting stars abide,
And whose soft gloom, and boundless depth, might tempt
The curious eye to look for them by day.

And, in his *American Notes*, I remember Dickens notices the same truth, describing himself as lying drowsily on the barge deck, looking not at, but *through* the sky. And if you look intensely at the pure blue of a serene sky, you will see that there is a variety and fulness in its very repose. It is not flat dead colour, but a deep, quivering, transparent body of penetrable air, in which you trace or imagine short, falling spots of deceiving light, and dim shades, faint, veiled vestiges of dark vapour; and it is this trembling transparency which our great modern master has especially aimed at and given. His blue is never laid on in

§ 8. These qualities are especially

given by modern masters.

§ 9. And by Claude.

§ 10. Total absence of them in Poussin.

smooth coats, but in breaking, mingling, melting hues, a quarter of an inch of which; cut off from all the rest of the picture, is still *spacious*, still infinite and immeasurable in depth. It is a painting of the air, something into which you can see, through the parts which are near you, into those which are far off; something which has no surface, and through which we can plunge far and farther, and without stay or end, into the profundity of space;—whereas, with all the old landscape painters, except Claude, you may indeed go a long way before you come to the sky, but you will knock your head against it at last. A perfectly genuine and untouched sky of Claude is indeed most perfect, and beyond praise, in all qualities of air, though even with him, I often feel rather that there is a great deal of pleasant air between me and the firmament, than that the firmament itself is only air. I do not mean, however, to say a word against such skies as that of the “Enchanted Castle,” or that marked 30 in the National Gallery, or one or two which I remember at Rome; but how little and by how few these fine passages of Claude are appreciated, is sufficiently proved by the sufferance of such villanous and unpalliated copies as we meet with usually all over Europe, like the “Marriage of Isaac,” in our own Gallery, to remain under his name. In fact, I do not remember above ten pictures of Claude’s, in which the skies, whether repainted or altogether copies, or perhaps from Claude’s hand, but carelessly laid in, like that marked 241, Dulwich Gallery, were not fully as feelingless and false as those of other masters; while, with the Poussins, there are no favourable exceptions. Their skies are systematically wrong; take, for instance, the sky of the “Sacrifice of Isaac.” It is here high noon, as is shown by the shadow of the figures; and what sort of colour is the sky at the top of the picture? Is it pale and grey with heat, full of

sunshine, and unfathomable in depth? On the contrary, it is of a pitch of darkness which, except on the Mont Blanc or Chimborazo, is as purely impossible as colour can be. He might as well have painted it coal black; and it is laid on with a dead coat of flat paint, having no one quality or resemblance of sky about it. It cannot have altered, because the land horizon is as delicate and tender in tone as possible, and is evidently unchanged; and to complete the absurdity of the whole thing, this colour holds its own, without graduation or alteration, to within three or four degrees of the horizon, where it suddenly becomes bold and unmixed yellow. Now the horizon at noon may be yellow when the whole sky is covered with dark clouds, and only *one* open streak of light left in the distance from which the whole light proceeds; but with a clear, open sky, and opposite the sun, at noon, such a yellow horizon as this is physically impossible. Even supposing that the upper part of the sky were pale and warm, and that the transition from the one hue to the other were effected imperceptibly and gradually, as is invariably the case in reality, instead of taking place within a space of two or three degrees;—even then, this gold yellow would be altogether absurd; but as it is, we have in this sky (and it is a fine picture—one of the best of Gaspar's that I know), a notable example of the truth of the old masters—two impossible colours impossibly united! Find such a colour in Turner's noon-day zenith as the blue at the top, or such a colour at a noon-day horizon as the yellow at the bottom, or such a connection of any colours whatsoever as that in the centre, and then you may talk about his being false to nature if you will. Nor is this a solitary instance; it is Gaspar Poussin's favourite and characteristic effect. I remember twenty such, most of them worse than this, in the downright surface and opacity of blue. And, by the by, while we are talking of graduations of colour, look at the large

Physical errors
in his general
treatment of
open sky.

§ 11. Errors of
Cuyt in gra-
duation of
colour.

Cuyp in the Dulwich Gallery, which Mr. Hazlitt considers the "finest in the world," and of which he very complimentarily says, "The tender green of the vallies, the gleaming lake, the purple light of the hills, have an effect like the *down* on an unripe nectarine!" I ought to have apologised before now, for not having studied sufficiently in Covent-garden to be provided with terms of correct and classical criticism. One of my friends begged me to observe, the other day, that Claude was "pulpy;" another added the yet more gratifying information that he was "juicy;" and it is now happily discovered that Cuyp is "downy." Now I dare say that the sky of this first-rate Cuyp is very like an unripe nectarine: all that I have to say about it is, that it is exceedingly unlike a sky. The blue remains unchanged and ungraduated over three-fourths of it, down to the horizon, while the sun, in the left-hand corner, is surrounded with a halo, first of yellow and then of crude pink, both being separated from each other, and the last from the blue, as sharply as the belts of a rainbow, and both together not ascending ten degrees in the sky. Now it is difficult to conceive how any man calling himself a painter could impose such a thing on the public, and still more how the public can receive it, as a representation of that sunset purple which invariably extends its influence to the zenith, so that there is no pure blue anywhere, but a purple increasing in purity gradually down to its point of greatest intensity (about forty-five degrees from the horizon), and then melting imperceptibly into the gold, the three colours extending their influence over the whole sky; so that throughout the whole sweep of the heaven, there is no one spot where the colour is not in an equal state of transition—passing from gold into orange, from that into rose, from that into purple, from that into blue, with absolute equality of change, so that in no place can it be said, "here it changes," and in no

place, "here it is unchanging." This is invariably the case. There is no such thing—there never was, and never will be such a thing, while God's heaven remains as it is made—as a serene, sunset sky, with its purple and rose in *belts* about the sun. Yet people call such an absurdity as this, "truth;" and laugh at Turner, because he paints crimson clouds!

Such bold, broad examples of ignorance as these § 12. The exceeding value of the skies of the early Italian and Dutch schools. Their qualities are unattainable in modern times. would soon set aside all the claims of the professed landscape painters to truth, with whatever delicacy of colour or manipulation they may be disguised. But there are some skies, of the Dutch school, in which clearness and coolness have been aimed at, instead of depth; and some introduced merely as backgrounds to the historical subjects of the older Italians, which there is no matching in modern times; one would think angels had painted them, for all is now clay and oil in comparison. It seems as if we had totally lost the art, for surely otherwise, however little our painters might aim at it or feel it, they would touch the chord sometimes by accident; but they never do, and the mechanical incapacity is still more strongly evidenced by the muddy struggles of the unhappy Germans, who have the feeling, partially strained, artificial, and diseased, indeed, but still genuine enough to bring out the tone, if they had the mechanical means and technical knowledge. But, however they were obtained, the clear tones of this kind of the older Italians are glorious and enviable in the highest degree; and we shall show, when we come to speak of the beautiful, that they are one of the most just grounds of the fame of the old masters.

But there is a series of phenomena connected with § 13. Phenomena of visible sunbeams. Their nature and cause. the open blue of the sky, which we must take especial notice of, as it is of constant occurrence in the works of Turner and Claude, the effects, namely, of visible sunbeams. It will be necessary for us thoroughly to under-

stand the circumstances under which such effects take place.*

Aqueous vapour or mist, suspended in the atmosphere, becomes visible exactly as dust does in the air of a room. In the shadows you not only cannot see the dust itself, because unilluminated, but you can see other objects through the dust without obscurity, the air being thus actually rendered more transparent by a deprivation of light. Where a sunbeam enters, every particle of dust becomes visible, and a palpable interruption to the sight, so that a transverse sunbeam is a real obstacle to the vision, you cannot see things clearly through it.

In the same way, wherever vapour is illuminated by transverse rays, there it becomes visible as a whiteness or mistiness more or less affecting the purity of the blue, and destroying it exactly in proportion to the degree of illumination. But where vapour is in shade, it has very little effect on the sky, perhaps making it a little deeper and greyer than it otherwise would be, but not itself, unless very dense, distinguishable or felt as mist.

§ 14. They are only illuminated mist, and cannot appear when the sky is free from vapour, nor when it is without clouds.

The appearance of mist or whiteness in the blue of the sky, is thus a circumstance which more or less accompanies sunshine, and which, supposing the quantity of vapour constant, is greatest in the brightest sunlight. When there are no clouds in the sky, the whiteness, as it affects the whole sky equally, is not particularly noticeable. But when there are clouds between us and the sun, the sun being low, those clouds cast shadows

* I shall often be obliged, in the present portion of the work, to enter somewhat tediously into the examination of the physical causes of phenomena, in order that in future, when speaking of the beautiful, I may not be obliged to run every now and then into physics, but may be able to assert a thing fearlessly to be right or wrong, false or true, with reference for proof to principles before developed. I must be allowed, therefore, at present, to spend sometimes almost more time in the investigation of nature than in the criticism of art.

along and through the mass of suspended vapour. Within the space of these shadows, the vapour, as above stated, becomes transparent and invisible, and the sky appears of a pure blue. But where the sunbeams strike, the vapour becomes visible in the form of the beams, occasioning those radiating shafts of light which are one of the most valuable and constant accompaniments of a low sun. The denser the mist, the more distinct and sharp edged will these rays be; when the air is very clear, they are mere vague, flushing, graduated passages of light; when it is very thick, they are keen edged and decisive in a very high degree.

We see then, first, that a quantity of mist dispersed through the whole space of the sky, is necessary to this phenomenon; and secondly, that what we usually think of as beams of greater brightness than the rest of the sky, are in reality only a part of that sky in its natural state of illumination, cut off and rendered brilliant by the shadows from the clouds,—that these shadows are in reality the source of the appearance of beams,—that, therefore, no part of the sky can present such an appearance, except when there are broken clouds between it and the sun; and lastly, that the shadows cast from such clouds are not necessarily grey or dark, but very nearly of the natural pure blue of a sky destitute of vapour.

Now, as it has been proved that the appearance of beams can only take place in a part of the sky which has clouds between it and the sun, it is evident that no appearance of beams can ever begin from the orb itself, except when there is a cloud or solid body of some kind between us and it; but that such appearances will almost invariably begin on the dark side of some of the clouds around it, the orb itself remaining the centre of a broad blaze of united light. Wordsworth has given us in two lines, the only circumstances under which rays can ever appear to have origin in the orb itself:—

§ 15. Erroneous tendency in the representation of such phenomena by the old masters.

But rays of light,
Now *suddenly* diverging from the orb,
Retired behind the mountain tops, or veiled
By the dense air, shot upwards.

Excursion, Book IX.

§ 16. The ray which appears in the dazzled eye should not be represented.

§ 17. The practice of Turner. His keen perception of the more delicate phenomena of rays.

And Turner has given us the effect magnificently in the "Dartmouth" of the River Scenery. It is frequent among the old masters, and constant in Claude; though the latter, from drawing his beams too fine, represents the effect upon the dazzled eye rather than the light which actually exists, and approximates very closely to the ideal which we see in the sign of the "Rising Sun;" nay, I am nearly sure that I remember cases in which he has given us the diverging beam, without any cloud or hill interfering with the orb. It may, perhaps, be somewhat difficult to say how far it is allowable to represent that kind of ray which is seen by the dazzled eye. It is very certain that we never look towards a bright sun without seeing glancing rays issue from it; but it is equally certain that those rays are no more real existences than the red and blue circles which we see after having been so dazzled, and that if we are to represent the rays we ought also to cover our sky with pink and blue circles. I should on the whole consider it utterly false in principle to represent the visionary beam, and that we ought only to show that which has actual existence. Such we find to be the constant practice of Turner. Even where, owing to interposed clouds, he has beams appearing to issue from the orb itself, they are broad bursts of light, not spiky rays; and his more usual practice is to keep all near the sun in one simple blaze of intense light, and from the first clouds to throw beams to the zenith, though he often does not permit any appearance of rays until close to the zenith itself. Open at the 80th page of the Illustrated edition of Rogers's Poems. You have there a sky blazing with sunbeams; but they all begin a long way from the sun, and they are accounted

for by a mass of dense clouds surrounding the orb itself. Turn to the 7th page. Behind the old oak, where the sun is supposed to be, you have only a blaze of undistinguished light; but up on the left, over the edge of the cloud, on its dark side, the sun-beam. Turn to page 192,—blazing rays again, but all beginning where the clouds do, not one can you trace to the sun; and observe how carefully the long shadow on the mountain is accounted for by the dim dark promontory projecting out near the sun.

I need not multiply examples; you will find various modifications and uses of these effects throughout his works. But you will not find a single trace of them in the old masters. They give you the rays issuing from behind black clouds, because they are a coarse and common effect which could not possibly escape their observation, and because they are easily imitated. They give you the spiky shafts issuing from the orb itself, because these are partially symbolical of light, and assist a tardy imagination, as two or three rays scratched round the sun with a pen would, though they would be rays of darkness instead of light. But of the most beautiful phenomenon of all, the appearance of the delicate ray far in the sky, threading its way among the thin, transparent clouds, while all around the sun is unshadowed fire, there is no record nor example whatsoever in their works. It was too delicate and spiritual for them; probably their blunt and feelingless eyes never perceived it in nature, and their untaught imaginations were not likely to originate it in the study. Of the perfect and deeply based knowledge of such phenomena which is traceable in all the works of Turner, we shall see farther instances in the following chapter.

Little is to be said of the skies of our other landscape artists. In paintings, they are commonly toneless, crude, and wanting in depth and transparency; but in drawings, some very perfect and delicate ex-

§ 18. The total absence of any evidence of such perception in the works of the old masters.

§ 19. Truth of the skies of modern drawings.

amples have been produced by Copley Fielding, J. D. Harding, George Barret, David Cox, and one or two others; but with respect to the qualities of which we are at present speaking, it is not right to compare drawings with paintings, as the wash, or spunging, or other artifices peculiar to water colour, are capable of producing an appearance of quality which it needs much higher art to produce in oils.

§ 20. Recapitulation. The best skies of the ancients are, in *quality*, inimitable, but in rendering of various truth, childish.

Taken generally, the open skies of the moderns are inferior in quality to picked and untouched skies of the greatest of the ancients, but far superior to the average class of pictures which we have every day fathered upon their reputation. Nine or ten skies of Claude might be named which are not to be contended with, in their way, and as many of Cuyp. Teniers has given some very wonderful passages, and the clearness of the early Italian and Dutch schools is beyond all imitation. But the common blue daubing which we hear every day in our best Galleries attributed to Claude and Cuyp, and the genuine skies of Salvator, and of both the Poussins, are not to be compared for an instant with the best works of modern times, even in quality and transparency; while in all matters requiring delicate observation or accurate science,—in all which was not attainable by technicalities of art, and which depended upon the artist's knowledge and understanding of nature, all the works of the ancients are alike the productions of mere children, sometimes manifesting great sensibility, but proving at the same time, feebly developed intelligence, and ill regulated observation.

CHAPTER II.

OF TRUTH OF CLOUDS:—FIRST, OF THE REGION OF
THE CIRRUS.

OUR next subject of investigation must be the specific character of clouds, a species of truth which is especially neglected by artists; first, because as it is within the limits of possibility that a cloud may assume almost any form, it is difficult to point out, and not always easy to feel wherein error consists; and secondly, because it is totally impossible to study the forms of clouds from nature with care and accuracy, as a change in the subject takes place between every touch of the following pencil, and parts of an outline sketched at different instants cannot harmonize, nature never having intended them to come together. Still if artists were more in the habit of sketching clouds rapidly, and as accurately as possible in the outline, from nature, instead of daubing down what they call “effects” with the brush, they would soon find there is more beauty about their forms than can be arrived at by any random felicity of invention, however brilliant, and more essential character than can be violated without incurring the charge of falsehood,—falsehood as direct and definite, though not as traceable as error in the less varied features of organic form.

The first and most important part of the character of clouds, is dependent on the different altitudes at which they are formed. The atmosphere may be conveniently

§ 1. Difficulty of ascertaining wherein the truth of clouds consists.

§ 2. Variation of their character at different elevations.

The three regions to which they may conveniently be considered as belonging.

considered as divided into three spaces, each inhabited by clouds of specific character altogether different, though, in reality, there is no distinct limit fixed between them by nature, clouds being formed at *every* altitude, and partaking according to their altitude, more or less of the characters of the upper or lower regions. The scenery of the sky is thus formed of an infinitely graduated series of systematic forms of cloud, each of which has its own region in which alone it is formed, and each of which has specific characters which can only be properly determined by comparing them as they are found clearly distinguished by intervals of considerable space. I shall therefore consider the sky as divided into three regions; the upper region, or region of the cirrus; the central region, or region of the stratus; the lower region, or the region of the rain-cloud.

§ 3. Extent of the upper region.

The clouds which I wish to consider as included in the upper region, never touch even the highest mountains of Europe, and may therefore be looked upon as never formed below an elevation of at least 15,000 feet; they are the motionless multitudinous lines of delicate vapour with which the blue of the open sky is commonly streaked or speckled after several days of fine weather. I must be pardoned for giving a detailed description of their specific characters as they are of constant occurrence in the works of modern artists, and I shall have occasion to speak frequently of them in future parts of the work. Their chief characters are—

§ 4. The symmetrical arrangement of its clouds.

first, symmetry: they are nearly always arranged in some definite and evident order, commonly in long ranks reaching sometimes from the zenith to the horizon, each rank composed of an infinite number of transverse bars of about the same length, each bar thickest in the middle, and terminating in a traceless vaporous point at each side, the ranks are in the direction of the wind, and the bars of course at right angles to it, these latter are

commonly slightly bent in the middle, the convex side to the wind. Frequently two systems of this kind, indicative of two currents of wind, at different altitudes intersect one another, forming a network. Another frequent arrangement is in groups of excessively fine, silky, parallel fibres, commonly radiating, or having a tendency to radiate from one of their extremities, and terminating in a plummy sweep at the other:—these are vulgarly known as “mares’ tails.” The plummy and expanded extremity of these is often bent upwards, sometimes back, and up again, giving an appearance of great flexibility and unity at the same time, as if the clouds were tough, and would hold together however bent. The narrow extremity is invariably turned to the wind, and the fibres are parallel with its direction. The upper clouds always fall into some modification of one or other of these arrangements. They thus differ from all other clouds, in having a plan and system, whereas other clouds, though there are certain laws which they cannot break, have yet perfect freedom from anything like a relative and general system of government. The upper clouds are to the lower, what soldiers on parade are to a mixed multitude; no men walk on their heads or their hands, and so there are certain laws which no clouds violate; but there is nothing except in the upper clouds resembling symmetrical discipline.

2ndly. Sharpness of edge. The edges of the bars of § 5. Their exceeding delicacy. the upper clouds which are turned to the wind, are often the sharpest which the sky shows; no outline whatever of any other kind of cloud, however marked and energetic, ever approaches the delicate decision of these edges. The outline of a black thunder-cloud is striking, from the great energy of the colour or shade of the general mass; but as a line, it is soft and indistinct, compared with the edge of the cirrus, in a clear sky with a brisk breeze. On the other hand, the edge of the bar turned away from the wind is always soft,

often imperceptible, melting into the blue interstice between it and its next neighbour. Commonly the sharper one edge is, the softer is the other, and the clouds look flat, and as if they slipped over each other like the scales of a fish. When both edges are soft, as is always the case when the sky is clear and windless, the cloud looks solid, round, and fleecy.

§ 6. Their number.

3rd. Multitude. The delicacy of these vapours is sometimes carried into such an infinity of division, that no other sensation of number that the earth or heaven can give is so impressive. Number is always most felt when it is symmetrical, (vide Burke on "Sublime," Part ii. sect. 8,) and, therefore, no sea-waves nor fresh leaves make their number so evident or so impressive as these vapours. Nor is nature content with the infinite of bars or lines alone—each bar is in its turn severed into a number of small undulatory masses, more or less connected according to the violence of the wind. When this division is merely effected by undulation the cloud exactly resembles sea-sand ribbed by the tide; but when the division amounts to real separation we have the mottled or mackerel skies. Commonly, the greater the division of its bars, the broader and more shapeless is the rank or field, so that in the mottled sky it is lost altogether, and we have large irregular fields of equal size, masses like flocks of sheep; such clouds are three or four thousand feet below the legitimate cirrus. I have seen them cast a shadow on the Mont Blanc at sunset, so that they must descend nearly to within fifteen thousand feet of the earth.

§ 7. Causes of their peculiarly delicate colouring.

4th. Purity of colour. The nearest of these clouds—those over the observer's head, being at least three miles above him, and nearly all entering the ordinary sphere of vision, farther from him still,—their dark sides are much greyer and cooler than those of other clouds, owing to their distance. They are com-

posed of the purest aqueous vapour, free from all foulness of earthy gases, and of this in the lightest and most ætherial state in which it can be, to be visible. Further, they receive the light of the sun in a state of far greater intensity than lower objects, the beams being transmitted to them through atmospheric air far less dense, and wholly unaffected by mist, smoke, or any other impurity. Hence their colours are the most pure and vivid, and their white the most unsullied and perfect of all clouds.

Lastly, Variety. Variety is never so conspicuous, as ^{§ 8. Their variety of form.} when it is united with symmetry. The perpetual change of form in other clouds, is monotonous in its very dissimilarity, nor is difference striking where no connexion is implied; but if through a range of barred clouds, crossing half the heaven, all governed by the same forces and falling into one general form, there be yet a marked and evident dissimilarity between each member of the great mass—one more finely drawn, the next more delicately moulded, the next more gracefully bent—each broken into differently modelled and variously numbered groups, the variety is doubly striking, because contrasted with the perfect symmetry of which it forms a part. Hence, the importance of the truth, that nature never lets one of the members of even her most disciplined groups of cloud, be like another; but though each is adapted for the same function, and in its great features resembles all the others, not one, out of the millions with which the sky is chequered, is without a separate beauty and character, appearing to have had distinct thought occupied in its conception, and distinct forces in its production; and in addition to this perpetual invention, visible in each member of each system, we find systems of separate cloud intersecting one another, the sweeping lines mingled and interwoven with the rigid bars, these in their turn melting into banks of sand-like ripple and flakes of drifted and irre-

gular foam, under all, perhaps, the massy outline of some lower cloud moves heavily across the motionless buoyancy of the upper lines, and indicates at once their elevation and their repose.

§ 9. Total absence of even the slightest effort at their representation, in ancient landscape.

Such are the great attributes of the upper cloud region; whether they are beautiful, valuable, or impressive, it is not our present business to decide, nor to endeavour to discover the reason of the somewhat remarkable fact, that the whole field of ancient landscape art affords, as far as we remember, but one instance of any effort whatever to represent the character of this cloud region. That one instance is the landscape of Rubens in our own gallery, in which the mottled or fleecy sky is given with perfect truth and exquisite beauty. To this should perhaps be added, some of the backgrounds of the historical painters, where horizontal lines were required, and a few level bars of white or warm colour cross the serenity of the blue. These, as far as they go, are often very perfect, and the elevation and repose of their effect might, we should have thought, have pointed out to the landscape painters that there was something (I do not say much, but certainly something) to be made out of the high clouds. Not one of them, however, took the hint. To whom, among them all, can we look for the slightest realization of the fine and faithful descriptive passage of the "Excursion," already alluded to:—

But rays of light,
Now suddenly diverging from the orb,
Retired behind the mountain tops, or, veiled
By the dense air, shot upwards to the crown
Of the blue firmament—aloft—and wide :
And multitudes of little floating clouds,
Ere we, who saw, of change were conscious, pierced
Through their ethereal texture, had become
Vivid as fire,—clouds separately poised,
Innumerable multitude of forms
Scattered through half the circle of the sky ;
And giving back, and shedding each on each,

With prodigal communion, the bright hues
 Which from the unapparent fount of glory
 They had imbibed, and ceased not to receive.
 That which the heavens displayed the liquid deep
 Repeated, but with unity sublime.

There is but one master whose works we can think of while we read this; one alone has taken notice of the neglected upper sky; it is his peculiar and favourite field; he has watched its every modification, and given its every phase and feature; at all hours, in all seasons, he has followed its passions and its changes, and has brought down and laid open to the world another apocalypse of Heaven.

§ 10. The intense and constant study of them by Turner.

There is scarcely a painting of Turner's, in which serenity of sky and intensity of light are aimed at together, in which these clouds are not used, though there are not two cases in which they are used altogether alike. Sometimes they are crowded together in masses of mingling light, as in the "Shylock;" every part and atom sympathising in that continuous expression of slow movement which Shelley has so beautifully touched:—

Underneath the young grey dawn
 A multitude of dense, white fleecy clouds,
 Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains,
Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind.

At other times they are blended with the sky itself, felt only here and there by a ray of light calling them into existence out of its misty shade, as in the "Mercury and Argus;" sometimes, where great repose is to be given, they appear in a few detached, equal, rounded flakes, which seem to hang motionless, each like the shadow of the other, in the deep blue of the zenith, as in the "Acro-Corinth;" sometimes they are scattered in fiery flying fragments, each burning with separate energy, as in the "Temeraire;" sometimes woven together with fine threads of intermediate darkness, melting into the blue, as in the "Napoleon." But in all

cases the exquisite manipulation of the master gives to each atom of the multitude its own character and expression. Though they be countless as leaves, each has its portion of light, its shadow, its reflex, its peculiar and separating form.

§ 11. His vignette, "Sunrise on the Sea."

Take for instance the illustrated edition of Rogers' Poems,* and open it at the 80th page, and observe how every attribute which I have pointed out in the upper sky, is there rendered with the faithfulness of a mirror; the long lines of parallel bars, the delicate curvature from the wind, which the inclination of the sail shows you to be from the west; the excessive sharpness of every edge which is turned to the wind, the faintness of every opposite one, the breaking up of each bar into rounded masses, and finally, the inconceivable variety with which individual form has been given to every member of the multitude, and not only individual form, but roundness and substance even where there is scarcely a hair's breadth of cloud to express it in. Observe, above everything, the varying indication of space and depth in the whole, so that you may look through and through from one cloud to another, feeling not merely how they retire to the horizon, but how they melt back into the recesses of the sky, every interval being filled with absolute air, and all its spaces so melting and fluctuating, and fraught with change as with repose, that as you look, you will fancy that the rays shoot higher and higher into the vault of light, and that the pale streak of horizontal vapour is melting away from the cloud that it crosses. Now watch for the next barred sunrise, and take this vignette to the window, and test it by nature's

* I use this work frequently for illustration, because it is the only one I know in which the engraver has worked with delicacy enough to give the real forms and touches of Turner. I can reason from these plates, (in questions of form only,) nearly as well as I could from the drawings.

own clouds, among which you will find forms and passages, I do not say merely *like*, but apparently the actual originals of parts of this very drawing. And with whom will you do this, except with Turner? Will you do it with Claude, and set that blank square yard of blue, with its round, white, flat fixtures of similar cloud, beside the purple infinity of nature, with her countless multitude of shadowy lines, and flaky waves, and folded veils of variable mist? Will you do it with Poussin, and set those massy steps of unyielding solidity, with the chariot-and-four driving up them, by the side of the delicate forms which terminate in threads too fine for the eye to follow them, and of texture so thin woven that the earliest stars shine through them? Will you do it with Salvator, and set that volume of violent and restless manufactory smoke beside those calm and quiet bars, which pause in the heaven as if they would never leave it more? And yet you will say that these men painted nature, and that Turner does not!

Now we have just seen how this great artist uses the sharp-edged cirri, when he aims at giving great transparency of air. But it was shown in the preceding chapter that sunbeams, or the appearance of them, are always sharper in their edge in proportion as the air is more misty, as they are most defined in a room where there is most dust flying about in it. Consequently, in the vignette we have been just noticing, where transparency is to be given, though there is a blaze of light, its beams are never edged; a tendency to rays is visible, but you cannot in any part find a single marked edge of a rising sunbeam, the sky is merely more flushed in one place than another. Now let us see what Turner does when he wants mist. Turn to the "Alps at Daybreak," p. 193, in the same book. Here we have the cirri used again, but now they have no sharp edges, they are all fleecy and mingling with each other, though every one of them has the most exquisite indication of

§ 12. His use of the cirrus in expressing mist.

individual form, and they melt back, not till they are lost in exceeding light, as in the other plate, but into a mysterious, fluctuating, shadowy sky, of which, though the light penetrates through it all, you perceive every part to be charged with vapour. Notice particularly the half-indicated forms even where it is most serene, behind the snowy mountains. And now, how are the sunbeams drawn? No longer indecisive, flushing, palpitating, every one is sharp and clear, and terminated by definite shadow; note especially the marked lines on the upper clouds; finally, observe the difference in the mode of indicating the figures, which are here misty and indistinguishable, telling only as shadows, though they are near and large, while those in the former vignette came clear upon the eye, though they were so far off as to appear mere points.

§ 13. His consistency in every minor feature.

Now is this perpetual consistency in all points, this concentration of every fact which can possibly bear upon what we are to be told, this watchfulness of the entire meaning and system of nature, which fills every part and space of the picture with coincidences of witness, which come out upon us, as they would from the reality, more fully and deeply in proportion to the knowledge we possess and the attention we give, admirable or not? I could go on writing page after page on every sky of Turner's, and pointing out fresh truths in every one. In the "Havre," for instance, of the Rivers of France, we have a new fact pointed out to us with respect to these cirri, namely, their being so faint and transparent as not to be distinguishable from the blue of the sky, (a frequent case,) except in the course of a sunbeam, which, however, does not illumine their edges, they being not solid enough to reflect light, but penetrates their whole substance, and renders them flat, luminous forms in its path, instantly and totally lost at its edge. And thus a separate essay would be required by every picture, to make fully understood the

new phenomena which it treated and illustrated. But after once showing what are the prevailing characteristics of these clouds, we can only leave it to the reader to trace them wherever they occur. There are some fine and characteristic passages of this kind of cloud given by Stanfield, though he dares not use them in multitude, and is wanting in those refined qualities of form which it is totally impossible to explain in words, but which, perhaps, by simple outlines, on a large scale, selected from the cloud forms of various artists, I may in following portions of the work illustrate with the pencil.

Of the colours of these clouds I have spoken before, § 14. The colour of the upper clouds. (Sec. I. Chap. II.); but though I then alluded to their purity and vividness, I scarcely took proper notice of their variety; there is indeed in nature variety in all things, and it would be as absurd as vain to point it out fully in each case, yet the colours of these clouds are so marvellous in their changefulness, that they require particular notice. If you watch for the next sunset, when there are a considerable number of these cirri in the sky, you will see, especially at the zenith, that the sky does not remain of the same colour for two inches together; one cloud has a dark side of cold blue, and a fringe of milky white; another, above it, has a dark side of purple and an edge of red; another, nearer the sun, has an under-side of orange and an edge of gold; these you will find mingled with, and passing into the blue of the sky, which in places you will not be able to distinguish from the cool grey of the darker clouds, and which will be itself full of graduation, now pure and deep, now faint and feeble; and all this is done, not in large pieces, nor on a large scale, but over and over again in every square yard, so that there is no single part nor portion of the whole sky which has not in itself variety of colour enough for a separate picture, and yet no single part which is like

another, or which has not some peculiar source of beauty, and some peculiar arrangement of colour of its own. Now, instead of this, you get in the old masters—Cuyp, or Claude, or whoever they may be—a field of blue, delicately, beautifully, and uniformly shaded down to the yellow sun, with a certain number of similar clouds, each with a dark side of the same grey, and an edge of the same yellow. I do not say that nature never does anything like this, but I say that her *principle* is to do a great deal more, and that what she does more than this,—what I have above described, and what you may see in nine sunsets out of ten,—has been observed, attempted, and rendered by Turner only, and by him with a fidelity and force which presents us with more essential truth, and more clear expression and illustration of natural laws, in every wreath of vapour, than composed the whole stock of heavenly information, which lasted Cuyp and Claude their lives.

§ 15. Recapitulation.

We close then our present consideration of the upper clouds, to return to them when we know what is beautiful; we have at present only to remember that of these clouds, and the truths connected with them, none before Turner had taken any notice whatsoever; that had they therefore been even feebly and imperfectly represented by him, they would yet have given him a claim to be considered more extended and universal in his statement of truths than any of his predecessors; how much more when we find that deep fidelity in his studied and perfect skies which opens new sources of delight to every advancement of our knowledge, and to every added moment of our contemplation.

CHAPTER III.

OF TRUTH OF CLOUDS :—SECONDLY, OF THE CENTRAL
CLOUD REGION.

WE have next to investigate the character of the Central Cloud Region, which I consider as including all clouds which are the usual characteristic of ordinary serene weather, and which touch and envelope the mountains of Switzerland, but never affect those of our own island ; they may therefore be considered as occupying a space of air ten thousand feet in height, extending from five to fifteen thousand feet above the sea.

§ 1. Extent and typical character of the central cloud region.

These clouds, according to their elevation, appear with great variety of form, often partaking of the streaked or mottled character of the higher region, and as often, when the precursors of storm, manifesting forms closely connected with the lowest rain clouds ; but the species especially characteristic of the central region is a white, ragged, irregular, and scattered vapour, which has little form and less colour, and of which a good example may be seen in the largest landscape of Cuyp, in the Dulwich Gallery. When this vapour collects into masses, it is partially rounded, clumsy, and ponderous, as if it would tumble out of the sky, shaded with a dull grey, and totally devoid of any appearance of energy or motion. Even in nature, these clouds are scarcely worth raising our heads to look at ; and on canvass, they are valuable only as a means of introducing light, and breaking the monotony of blue ; yet they are,

§ 2. Its characteristic clouds, requiring no attention nor thought for their represen-

tation, are therefore favourite subjects with the old masters.

perhaps, beyond all others the favourite clouds of the old masters. Whether they had any motive for the adoption of such materials, beyond the extreme facility with which acres of canvass might thus be covered without any troublesome exertion of thought; or any temptation to such selections beyond the impossibility of error where nature shows no form, and the impossibility of deficiency where she shows no beauty, it is not here the place to determine. Such skies are happily beyond the reach of criticism, for he who tells you nothing cannot tell you a falsehood. A little flake-white, glazed with a light brush over the carefully toned blue, permitted to fall into whatever forms chance might determine, with the single precaution that their edges should be tolerably irregular, supplied, in hundreds of instances, a sky quite good enough for all ordinary purposes—quite good enough for cattle to graze, or boors to play at nine-pins under—and equally devoid of all that could gratify, inform, or offend.

§ 3. The clouds of Salvator and Poussin.

But although this kind of cloud is, as I have said, typical of the central region, it is not one which nature is fond of. She scarcely ever lets an hour pass without some manifestation of finer forms, sometimes approaching the upper cirri, sometimes the lower cumulus. And then in the lower outlines, we have the nearest approximation which nature ever presents to the clouds of Claude, Salvator, and Poussin, to the characters of which I must request especial attention, as it is here only that we shall have a fair opportunity of comparing their skies with those of the modern school. I shall, as before, glance rapidly at the great laws of specific form, and so put it in the power of the reader to judge for himself of the truth of representation.

§ 4. Their essential characters.

Clouds, it is to be remembered, are not so much solid bodies borne irregularly before the wind, as they are the wind itself, rendered visible in parts of its progress by a fall of temperature in the moisture it con-

tains. Thus a cloud, whose parts are in constant motion, will hover on a snowy mountain, pursuing constantly the same channel on its flanks, and yet remaining of the same size, the same form, and in the same place, for half a day together. No matter how violent or how capricious the wind may be, the instant it approaches the spot where the chilly influence of the snow extends, the moisture it carries becomes visible, and then and there the cloud forms on the instant, apparently maintaining its form against the wind, though the careful and keen eye can see all its parts in the most rapid motion across the mountain. The outlines of such a cloud are of course not determined by the irregular impulses of the wind, but by the fixed lines of radiant heat which regulate the temperature of the atmosphere of the mountain. It is terminated, therefore, not by changing curves, but by steady right lines of more or less decision, often exactly correspondent with the outline of the mountain on which it is formed, and falling therefore into grotesque peaks and precipices. I have seen the marked and angular outline of the Grandes Jorasses, at Chamonix, mimicked in its every jag by a line of clouds above it. What in such cases takes place palpably and remarkably, is more or less a law of formation in all clouds whatsoever, they being bounded rather by lines expressive of changes of temperature in the atmosphere, than by the impulses of the currents of wind in which those changes take place. Even when in rapid and visible motion across the sky, the variations which take place in their outlines are not so much alterations of position and arrangement of parts, as they are the alternate formation and disappearance of parts. There is, therefore, usually a parallelism and consistency in their great outlines, which gives system to the smaller curves of which they are composed; and if these great lines be taken, rejecting the minutiae of variation, the resultant

§ 5. Their angular forms and general decision of outline.

form will almost always be angular, and full of character and decision. In the flock-like fields of equal masses, each individual mass has the effect, not of an ellipse or circle, but of a rhomboid; the sky is crossed and chequered, not honey-combed; in the lower cumuli, even though the most rounded of all clouds, the groups are not like balloons or bubbles, but like towers or mountains. And the result of this arrangement in masses more or less angular, varied with, and chiefly constructed of, curves of the utmost freedom and beauty, is that appearance of exhaustless and fantastic energy which gives every cloud a marked character of its own, suggesting resemblances to the specific outlines of organic objects. I do not say that such accidental resemblances are a character to be imitated; but merely that they bear witness to the originality and vigour of separate conception in cloud forms, which gives to the scenery of the sky a force and variety no less delightful than that of the changes of mountain outline in a hill district of great elevation; and that there is added to this a spirit-like feeling, a capricious, mocking imagery of passion and life, totally different from any effects of inanimate form that the earth can show.

§ 6. The composition of their minor curves.

The minor contours, out of which the larger outlines are composed, are indeed beautifully curvilinear; but they are never monotonous in their curves. First comes a concave line, then a convex one, then an angular jag, breaking off into spray, then a downright straight line, then a curve again, then a deep gap, and a place where all is lost and melted away, and so on; displaying in every inch of the form renewed and ceaseless invention, setting off grace with rigidity, and relieving flexibility with force, in a manner scarcely less admirable, and far more changeful than even in the muscular forms of the human frame. Nay, such is the exquisite composition of all this, that you may take any

single fragment of any cloud in the sky, and you will find it put together as if there had been a year's thought over the plan of it, arranged with the most studied inequality—with the most delicate symmetry—with the most elaborate contrast, a picture in itself. You may try every other piece of cloud in the heaven, and you will find them every one as perfect, and yet not one in the least like another.

Now it may, perhaps, for anything we know, or have yet proved, be highly expedient and proper, in art, that this variety, individuality, and angular character of nature should be changed into a mass of convex curves, each precisely like its neighbour in all respects, and unbroken from beginning to end;—it may be highly original, masterly, bold, whatever you choose to call it; but it is *false*. I do not intend at present to dispute that circular sweeps of the brush, leaving concentric lines distinctly indicative of every separate horse hair of its constitution, may be highly indicative of masterly handling. I do not dispute that the result may be graceful and sublime in the highest degree, especially when I consider the authority of those vaporescent flourishes, precisely similar in character, with which the more sentimental of the cherubs are adorned and encompassed in models of modern penmanship; nay, I do not take upon me to assert that the clouds which in ancient Germany were more especially and peculiarly devoted to the business of catching princesses off desert islands, and carrying them to enchanted castles, might not have possessed something of the pillowy organization which we may suppose best adapted for functions of such delicacy and dispatch. But I do mean to say that the clouds which God sends upon his earth as the ministers of dew, and rain, and shade, and with which he adorns his heaven, setting them in its vault for the thrones of his spirits, have not in one instant or atom of their existence, one feature

§ 7. Their characters, as given by S. Rosa.

in common with such conceptions and creations. And there are, beyond dispute, more direct and unmitigated falsehoods told, and more laws of nature set at open defiance in *one* of the "rolling" skies of Salvator, such as that marked 159 in the Dulwich Gallery, than were ever attributed, even by the ignorant and unfeeling, to all the wildest flights of Turner put together.

§ 8. Monotony and falsehood of the clouds of the Italian school generally.

And it is not as if the error were only occasional. It is systematic and constant in all the Italian masters, and in most of the Dutch. They looked at clouds, as at everything else which did not particularly help them in their great end of deception, with utter carelessness and bluntness of feeling,—saw that there were a great many rounded passages in them,—found it much easier to sweep circles than to design beauties, and sat down contented in their studies, to flourish away again and again, with perpetual repetitions of the same spherical conceptions, having about the same relation to the clouds of nature, that a child's carving of a turnip has to the head of the Apollo. Look at the round things about the sun in the bricky Claude, the smallest of the three Sea-ports, in the National Gallery. They are a great deal more like half-crowns than clouds. Take the ropy tough-looking wreath in the sacrifice of Isaac, and find one part of it, if you can, which is not the repetition of every other part of it, all together being as round and vapid as the brush could draw them; or take the two cauliflower-like protuberances in No. 220, of the Dulwich Gallery, and admire the studied similarity between them; you cannot tell which is which: or take the attributed Nicholas Poussin, No. 212, Dulwich Gallery, in which, from the brown trees to the right hand side of the picture, there is not one line which is not physically impossible.

§ 9. Vast size of congregated masses of cloud.

But it is not the outline only which is thus systematically false. The drawing of the solid form is worse still, for it is to be remembered that although clouds of

course arrange themselves more or less into broad masses, with a light side and dark side, both their light and shade are invariably composed of a series of divided masses, each of which has in its outline as much variety and character as the great outline of the cloud, presenting therefore, a thousand times repeated, all that I have described as characteristic of the general form. Nor are these multitudinous divisions a truth of slight importance in the character of sky, for they are dependent on, and illustrative of, a quality which is usually in a great degree overlooked,—the enormous retiring spaces of solid clouds. Between the illumined edge of a heaped cloud, and that part of its body which turns into shadow, there will generally be a clear distance of several miles, more or less of course, according to the general size of the cloud, but in such large masses as in Poussin and others of the old masters, occupy the fourth or fifth of the visible sky, the clear illumined breadth of vapour, from the edge to the shadow, involves at least a distance of five or six miles. We are little apt, in watching the changes of a mountainous range of cloud, to reflect that the masses of vapour which compose it, are huger and higher than any mountain range of the earth, and the distances between mass and mass are not yards of air traversed in an instant by the flying form, but valleys of changing atmosphere leagues over; that the slow motion of ascending curves, which we can scarcely trace, is a boiling energy of exulting vapour rushing into the heaven a thousand feet in a minute, and that the toppling angle whose sharp edge almost escapes notice in the multitudinous forms around it, is a nodding precipice of storms 3000 feet from base to summit. It is not until we have actually compared the forms of the sky with the hill ranges of the earth, and seen the soaring Alp overtopped and buried in one surge of the sky, that we begin to conceive or appreciate the colossal scale of the

§ 10. Demonstrable by comparison with mountain ranges.

phenomena of the latter. But of this there can be no doubt in the mind of any one accustomed to trace the forms of clouds among hill ranges—as it is there a demonstrable and evident fact, that the space of vapour visibly extended over an ordinarily cloudy sky, is not less, from the point nearest to the observer, to the horizon, than twenty leagues; that the size of every mass of separate form, if it be at all largely divided, is to be expressed in terms of *miles*; and that every boiling heap of illuminated mist in the nearer sky, is an enormous mountain, fifteen or twenty thousand feet in height, six or seven miles over in illuminated surface, furrowed by a thousand colossal ravines, torn by local tempests into peaks and promontories, and changing its features with the majestic velocity of the volcano.

§ 11. And consequent divisions and varieties of feature.

To those who have once convinced themselves of these proportions of the heaven, it will be immediately evident, that though we might, without much violation of truth, omit the minor divisions of a cloud four yards over, it is the veriest audacity of falsehood to omit those of masses where for yards we have to read miles, first, because it is physically impossible that such a space should be without many and vast divisions; secondly, because divisions at such distances must be sharply and forcibly marked by aerial perspective, so that not only they must be there, but they must be visible and evident to the eye; and thirdly, because these multitudinous divisions are absolutely necessary, in order to express this space and distance, which cannot but be fully and imperfectly felt, even with every aid and evidence that art can give of it.

§ 12. Not lightly to be omitted.

Now if an artist taking for his subject a chain of vast mountains, several leagues long, were to unite all their varieties of ravine, crag, chasm, and precipice, into one solid, unbroken mass, with one light side and one dark side, looking like a white ball or parallelopiped two yards broad, the words “breadth,” “boldness,” or,

"generalization," would scarcely be received as a sufficient apology for a proceeding so glaringly false, and so painfully degrading. But when, instead of the really large and simple forms of mountains, united, as they commonly are, by some great principle of common organization, and so closely resembling each other as often to correspond in line, and join in effect; when instead of this, we have to do with spaces of cloud twice as vast, broken up into a multiplicity of forms necessary to, and characteristic of, their very nature—those forms subject to a thousand local changes, having no association with each other, and rendered visible in a thousand places by their own transparency or cavities, where the mountain forms would be lost in shade,—that this far greater space, and this far more complicated arrangement, should be all summed up into one round dumpling, with one swell of white, and one flat side of unbroken grey, is considered an evidence of the sublimest powers in the artist of generalization and breadth. Now it may be broad, it may be grand, it may be beautiful, artistical, and in every way desirable. I don't say it is not — I merely say it is a concentration of every kind of falsehood: it is depriving heaven of its space, clouds of their buoyancy, winds of their motion, and distance of its blue.

This is done, more or less, by all the old masters, without an exception. Their idea of clouds was altogether similar; more or less perfectly carried out, according to their power of hand and accuracy of eye, but universally the same in conception. It was the idea of a comparatively small, round, puffed-up white body, irregularly associated with other round and puffed-up white bodies, each with a white light side, and a grey dark side, and a soft reflected light, floating a great way below a blue dome. Such is the idea of a cloud formed by most people; it is the first, general, uncultivated notion of what we see every day. People think of the clouds as about

§ 13. Imperfect conceptions of this size and extent in ancient landscape.

as big as they look—forty yards over, perhaps; they see generally that they are solid bodies, subject to the same laws as other solid bodies, roundish, whitish, and apparently suspended a great way under a high blue concavity. So that these ideas be tolerably given with nice smooth paint, they are content, and call it “nature.” How different it is from anything that nature ever did, or ever will do, I have endeavoured to show; but I cannot, and do not, expect the contrast to be fully felt, unless the reader will actually go out on days when, either before or after rain, the clouds arrange themselves into vigorous masses, and after arriving at something like a conception of their distance and size, from the mode in which they retire over the horizon, will for himself trace and watch their varieties of form and outline, as mass rises over mass in their illuminated bodies. Let him climb from step to step over their craggy and broken slopes, let him plunge into the long vistas of immeasurable perspective, that guide back to the blue sky; and when he finds his imagination lost in their immensity, and his senses confused with their multitude, let him go to Claude, to Berghem, to Cuyp, or to Poussin, and ask them for a like space, or like infinity.

§ 14. Total want of transparency and evanescence in the clouds of ancient landscape.

But perhaps the most grievous fault of all, in the clouds of these painters, is the utter want of transparency. Not in her most ponderous and lightless masses will nature ever leave us without some evidence of transmitted sunshine; and she perpetually gives us passages in which the vapour becomes visible only by the sunshine which it arrests and holds within itself, not caught on its surface, but entangled in its mass—floating fleeces, precious with the gold of heaven; and this translucency is especially indicated on the dark sides even of her heaviest wreaths, which possess opalescent and delicate hues of partial illumination, far more dependent upon the beams which pass through them than on those which are reflected upon them.

Nothing, on the contrary, can be more painfully and ponderously opaque than the clouds of the old masters universally. However far removed in ærial distance, and however brilliant in light, they never appear filmy or evanescent, and their light is always *on* them, not *in* them. And this effect is much increased by the positive and persevering determination on the part of their outlines not to be broken in upon, nor interfered with in the slightest degree, by any presumptuous blue, or impertinent winds. Stulz could not be more averse to the idea of being *ragged*. There is no inequality, no variation, no losing or disguising of line, no melting into nothingness, nor shattering into spray; edge succeeds edge with imperturbable equanimity, and nothing short of the most decided interference on the part of tree-tops, or the edge of the picture, prevents us from being able to follow them all the way round, like the coast of an island.

And be it remembered that all these faults and deficiencies are to be found in their drawing merely of the separate masses of the solid cumulus, the easiest drawn of all clouds. But nature scarcely ever confines herself to such masses, they form but the thousandth part of her variety of effect. She builds up a pyramid of their boiling volumes, bars this across like a mountain with the grey cirrus, envelopes it in black, ragged, drifting vapour, covers the open part of the sky with mottled horizontal fields, breaks through these with sudden and long sunbeams, tears up their edges with local winds, scatters over the gaps of blue the infinity of multitude of the high cirri, and melts even the unoccupied azure into palpitating shades. And all this is done over and over again in every quarter of a mile. Where Poussin or Claude have three similar dumplings, nature has fifty pictures, made up each of millions of minor thoughts—fifty aisles penetrating through angelic chapels to the Shechinah of the blue—fifty hollow ways

§ 15. Farther proof of their deficiency in space.

among bewildered hills—each with their own nodding rocks, and cloven precipices, and radiant summits, and robing vapours, but all unlike each other, except in beauty, all bearing witness to the unwearied, exhaustless operation of the Infinite Mind. Now, in cases like these especially, as we observed before of general nature, though it is altogether hopeless to follow out in the space of any one picture this incalculable and inconceivable glory, yet the painter can at least see that the space he has at his command, narrow and confined as it is, is made complete use of, and that no part of it shall be without entertainment and food for thought. If he could subdivide it by millionths of inches, he could not reach the multitudinous majesty of nature, but it is at least incumbent upon him to make the most of what he has, and not, by exaggerating the proportions, banishing the variety and repeating the forms of his clouds, to set at defiance the eternal principles of the heavens—fitfulness and infinity. And now let us, keeping in memory what we have seen of Poussin and Salvator, take up one of Turner's skies, and see whether *he* is as narrow in his conception, or as niggardly in his space. It does not matter which we take, his sublime "Babylon"* is a fair example for our present purpose. Ten miles away, down the Euphrates, where it gleams last along the plain, he gives us a drift of dark elongated vapour, melting beneath into a dim haze which embraces the hills on the horizon. It is exhausted with its own motion, and broken up by the wind in its own body into numberless groups of billowy and tossing fragments, which, beaten by the weight of storm down to the earth, are just lifting themselves again on wearied wings, and perishing in the effort. Above these, and far beyond them, the eye goes back to a broad sea of white, illuminated mist, or rather cloud melted into rain, and absorbed again before that rain has fallen, but penetrated

§ 16. Instance
of perfect truth
in the sky of
Turner's
"Babylon."

* Engraved in Finden's Bible Illustrations.

throughout, whether it be vapour or whether it be dew, with soft sunshine, turning it as white as snow. Gradually as it rises, the rainy fusion ceases, you cannot tell where the film of blue on the left begins—but it is deepening, deepening still,—and the cloud, with its edge first invisible, then all but imaginary, then just felt when the eye is *not* fixed on it, and lost when it is, at last rises, keen from excessive distance, but soft and mantling in its body, as a swan's bosom fretted by faint wind, heaving fitfully against the delicate deep blue, with white waves, whose forms are traced by the pale lines of opalescent shadow, shade only because the light is within it, and not upon it, and which break with their own swiftness into a driven line of level spray, winnowed into threads by the wind, and flung before the following vapour like those swift shafts of arrowy water which a great cataract shoots into the air beside it, trying to find the earth. Beyond these, again, rises a colossal mountain of grey cumulus, through whose shadowed sides the sunbeams penetrate in dim, sloping, rain-like shafts, and over which they fall in a broad burst of streaming light, sinking to the earth, and showing through their own visible radiance the three successive ranges of hills which connect its desolate plain with space. Above, the edgy summit of the cumulus, broken into fragments, recedes into the sky, which is peopled in its serenity with quiet multitudes of the white, soft, silent cirrus, and under these again, drift near the zenith, disturbed and impatient shadows of a darker spirit, seeking rest and finding none.

Now this is nature! It is the exhaustless living energy with which the universe is filled; and what will you set beside it of the works of other men? Show me a single picture, in the whole compass of ancient art, in which I can pass from cloud to cloud, from region to region, from first to second and third heaven, as I can here, and you may talk of

§ 17. And in his "Pools of Solomon."

Turner's want of truth. Turn to the "Pools of Solomon," and walk through the passages of mist as they melt on the one hand into those stormy fragments of fiery cloud, or, on the other, into the cold solitary shadows that compass the sweeping hill, and when you find an inch without air and transparency, and a hair's-breadth without changefulness and thought, and when you can count the torn waves of tossing radiance that gush from the sun, as you can count the fixed, white, insipidities of Claude, or when you can measure the modulation and the depth of that hollow mist, as you can the flourishes of the brush upon the canvass of Salvator, talk of Turner's want of truth!

But let us take up simpler and less elaborate works, for there is too much in these to admit of being analysed.

§ 18. Truths of outline and character in his "Como."

In the vignette of the Lake of Como, in Rogers's Italy, the space is so small that the details have been partially lost by the engraver; but enough remain to illustrate the great principles of cloud from which we have endeavoured to explain. Observe first the general angular outline of the volumes on the left of the sun. If you mark the points where the direction of their outline changes, and connect those points by right lines, the cloud will touch, but will not cut, those lines throughout. Yet its contour is as graceful as it is full of character—toppling, ready to change—fragile as enormous—evanescent as colossal. Observe how, where it crosses the line of the sun, it becomes luminous, illustrating what has been observed of the visibility of mist in sunlight. Observe, above all, the multiplicity of its solid form, the depth of its shadows in perpetual transition; it is not round and swelled, half light and half dark, but full of breaking irregular shadow and transparency—variable as the wind, and melting imperceptibly above into the haziness of the sun-lighted atmosphere, contrasted in all its vast forms with the

delicacy and the multitude of the brightly-touched cirri. Nothing can surpass the truth of this; the cloud is as gigantic in its simplicity as the Alp which it opposes; but how various, how transparent, how infinite in its organization!

It is instructive to compare with this such a sky as that of Backhuysen, No. 75, Dulwich Gallery, where we have perfectly spherical clusters of grape-like, smooth, opaque bodies, which are evidently the results of the artist's imaginative powers, strained to their highest pitch in his study, perhaps, however, modified and rendered more classical and ideal by his feeling of the beautiful in the human form, at least in that part of it which is in Dutchmen most peculiarly developed. There are few pictures which are so evidently in-door work as this, so completely in every part bearing witness to the habit of the artist of shutting his eyes and soul to every impression from without, and repeating for ever and ever, without a sensation of imperfection, a hope or desire of improvement, or a single thought of truth or nature, the same childish, contemptible, and impossible conception. It is a valuable piece of work, as teaching us the abasement into which the human mind may fall when it trusts to its own strength, and delights in its own imaginations.

But turn back to the first vignette in the Italy. The angular outlines and variety of modulation in the clouds above the sail, and the delicate atmosphere of morning mist into which they are dissolved about the breathing hills, require no comment; but one part of this vignette demands especial notice; it is the repetition of the outline of the snowy mountain by the light cloud above it. The cause of this I have already explained, and its occurrence here is especially valuable as bearing witness to the thorough and scientific knowledge thrown by Turner into his slightest works. The thing cannot be seen once in six months; it would not have been

§ 19. Compared with the clouds of Backhuysen.

§ 20. The deep based knowledge of the Alps in Turner's "Lake of Geneva."

noticed, much less introduced by an ordinary artist, and to the public it is a dead letter, or an offence. Ninety-nine persons in a hundred would not have observed this pale wreath of parallel cloud above the hill, and the hundredth in all probability says it is unnatural. It requires the most intimate and accurate knowledge of the Alps before such a piece of refined truth can be understood.

§ 21. Further principles of cloud form exemplified in his "Amalfi."

At the 216th page we have another and a new case, in which clouds in perfect repose, unaffected by wind, or any influence but that of their own elastic force, boil, rise, and melt in the heaven with more approach to globular form than under any other circumstances is possible. But even here the great outline of the mass is terminated by severe right lines, four sides of an irregular hexagon, and the lesser cloud is peaked like a cliff. But I name this vignette, not only because it is most remarkable for the buoyancy and ætherial elasticity of inward energy, indicated in spite of the most ponderous forms, and because it is as faithful as it is bold in the junction of those weighty masses with the delicate, horizontal lines of the lower air, but because it is a characteristic example of Turner's use of one of the facts of nature not hitherto noticed, that the edge of a partially transparent body is often darker than its central surface, because at the edge the light penetrates and passes through, which from the centre is reflected to the eye. The sharp, cutting edge of a wave, if not broken into foam, frequently appears for an instant almost black, and the outlines of these massy clouds, where their projecting forms rise against the light of their bodies, are almost always marked clearly and firmly by very dark edges. Hence we have frequently, if not constantly, multitudinous forms indicated only by outline, giving character and solidity to the great masses of light, without breaking their breadth. And Turner avails himself of these boldly and constantly,—outlining

forms with the brush of which no other indication is given. All the grace and solidity of the white cloud on the right-hand side of the vignette before us, depends upon such outlines.

As I before observed of mere execution, that one of the best tests of its excellence was the expression of *infinity*, so it may be noticed with respect to the painting of details generally, that more difference lies between one artist and another, in the attainment of this quality, than in any other of the efforts of art; and that if we wish, without reference to beauty of composition, or any other interfering circumstances, to form a judgment of the truth of painting, perhaps the very first thing we should look for, whether in one thing or another—foliage, or clouds, or waves, should be the expression of *infinity* always and everywhere, in all parts and divisions of parts. For we may be quite sure that what is not infinite, cannot be true; it does not, indeed, follow that what is infinite, always is true, but it can very rarely be false, for this simple reason, that it is a most difficult, if not impossible thing, for mortal mind to compose an infinity of any kind for itself, or to form an idea of perpetual variation, and to avoid all repetition, merely by its own resources, that is to say, by combinations of its ideas unexampled in nature. I believe the moment that we trust to ourselves, we repeat ourselves, and that therefore the moment we see in a work of any kind whatsoever, the expression of infinity, we may be all but certain that the workman has gone to nature for it; while, on the other hand, the moment we see repetition, or want of infinity, we may be absolutely certain that the workman has *not* gone to nature for it.

For instance, in the picture of Salvator before noticed, No. 220 in the Dulwich Gallery, as we see at once that the two masses of cloud absolutely repeat each other in every one of their forms, and that each is composed of about twelve white sweeps of the brush, all forming the

§ 22. Reasons for insisting on the *infinity* of Turner's works. Infinity is almost an unerring test of all truth.

§ 23. Instances of the total want of it in the works of Salvator.

same curve, and all of the same length, and as we can count these, and measure their common diameter, and by stating the same to anybody else, convey to him a full and perfect idea and knowledge of that sky in all its parts and proportions,—as we can do this, we may be absolutely certain, without reference to the real sky, or to any other part of nature, without even knowing what the white things were intended for, we may be certain that they cannot possibly resemble *anything*; that whatever they were meant for, they can be nothing but a violent contradiction of all nature's principles and forms.

§ 24. And of the universal presence of it in those of Turner. The conclusions which may be arrived at from it.

When, on the other hand, we take up such a sky as that of Turner's "Rouen, seen from St. Catherine's Hill," in the Rivers of France, and find, in the first place, that he has given us a distance over the hills in the horizon, into which, when we are tired of penetrating, we must turn and come back again, there being not the remotest chance of getting to the end of it; and when we see that from this measureless distance up to the zenith, the whole sky is one ocean of alternate waves of cloud and light, so blended together that the eye cannot rest on any one without being guided to the next, and so to a hundred more, till it is lost over and over again in every wreath—that if it divides the sky into quarters of inches, and tries to count or comprehend the component parts of any single one of those divisions, it is still as utterly defied and defeated by the part as by the whole—that there is not one line out of the millions there which repeats another, not one which is unconnected with another, not one which does not in itself convey histories of distance and space, and suggest new and changeful form; then we may be all but certain, though these forms are too mysterious and too delicate for us to analyse—though all is so crowded and so connected that it is impossible to test any single part by particular laws—yet without any such tests, we may be sure that this infinity can only be based on truth—that it

must be nature, because man could not have originated it, and that every form must be faithful, because none is like another. And therefore it is that I insist so constantly on this great quality of landscape painting, as it appears in Turner, because it is not merely a constant and most important truth in itself, but it almost amounts to a demonstration of every other truth. And it will be found a far rarer attainment in the works of other men than is commonly supposed, and the sign, wherever it is really found, of the very highest art. For we are apt to forget that the greatest *number* is no nearer infinity than the least, if it be definite number; and the vastest bulk is no nearer infinity than the most minute, if it be definite bulk; so that a man may multiply his objects for ever and ever, and be no nearer infinity than he had reached with one, if he do not vary them and confuse them; and a man may reach infinity in every touch and line, and part, and unit, if in these he be truthfully various and obscure. And we shall find, the more we examine the works of the old masters, that always, and in all parts, they are totally wanting in every feeling of infinity, and therefore in *all* truth: and even in the works of the moderns, though the aim is far more just, we shall frequently perceive an erroneous choice of means, and a substitution of mere number or bulk for real infinity, ending, as in the works of one of our artists most celebrated for *sublimity* of conception, (the general admiration of whose works, however ill-founded, I can perfectly understand, for I once admired them myself,) in morbid and meaningless tautology.

And therefore, in concluding our notice of the central cloud region, I should wish to dwell particularly on those skies of Turner's, in which we have the whole space of the heaven covered with the delicate dim flakes of gathering vapour which are the intermediate link between the central region and that of the rain-

§ 25. The multiplication of objects, or increase of their size, will not give the impression of infinity, but is the resource of novices.

§ 26. Farther instances of infinity in the grey skies of Turner.

cloud, and which assemble and grow out of the air, shutting up the heaven with a grey interwoven veil, before the approach of storm, faint, but universal, letting the light of the upper sky pass pallidly through their body, but never rending a passage for the ray. We have the first approach and gathering of this kind of sky most gloriously given in the vignette at p. 115 of Rogers' Italy, which is one of the most perfect pieces of feeling (if I may transgress my usual rules for an instant) extant in art, owing to the extreme grandeur and stern simplicity of the strange and ominous forms of level cloud behind the building. In that at page 223, there are passages of the same kind, of exceeding perfection. The sky through which the dawn is breaking in the "Voyage of Columbus," and that with the "Moonlight under the Rialto," in Rogers' Poems, the skies of the "Bethlehem," and the "Pyramids" in Finden's Bible series, and among the Academy pictures, that of the "Hero and Leander," and "Flight into Egypt," are characteristic and noble examples, as far as any individual works can be characteristic of the universality of this mighty mind. I ought not to forget the magnificent solemnity and fulness of the wreaths of gathering darkness in the "Folkestone."

§ 27. The excellence of the cloud-drawing of Stanfield.

We must not pass from the consideration of the central cloud region without noticing the general high quality of the cloud-drawing of Stanfield. He is limited in his range, and is apt in extensive compositions to repeat himself, neither is he ever very refined, but his cloud-form is firmly and fearlessly chiselled, with perfect knowledge, though usually with some want of feeling. As far as it goes, it is very grand and very tasteful, beautifully developed in the space of its solid parts, and full of action. Next to Turner, he is incomparably the noblest master of cloud-form of all our artists; in fact, he is the only one among them who really can *draw* a cloud. For it is a

very different thing to rub out an irregular white space neatly with the handkerchief, or to leave a bright little bit of paper in the middle of a wash, and to give the real anatomy of cloud-form with perfect articulation of chiaroscuro. We have multitudes of painters, who can throw a light bit of straggling vapour across their sky, or leave in it delicate and tender passages of breaking light; but this is a very different thing from taking up each of those bits or passages, and giving it structure, and parts, and solidity. The eye is satisfied with exceedingly little, as an indication of cloud, and a few clever sweeps of the brush on wet paper may give all that it requires; but this is not *drawing* clouds, nor will it ever appeal fully and deeply to the mind, except when it occurs only as a part of a higher system. And there is not one of our modern artists, except Stanfield, who can do much more than this. As soon as they attempt to lay detail upon their clouds, they appear to get bewildered, forget that they are dealing with forms regulated by precisely the same simple laws of light and shade as more substantial matter, overcharge their colour, confuse their shadows and dark sides, and end in mere ragged confusion. I believe the evil arises from their never attempting to render clouds except with the brush; other objects, at some period of study, they take up with the chalk or lead, and so learn something of their form; but they appear to consider clouds as altogether dependent on cobalt and camel's hair, and so never understand anything of their real anatomy. But whatever the cause, I cannot point to any central clouds of the moderns, except those of Turner and Stanfield, as really showing much knowledge of, or feeling for, nature, though *all* are incomparably superior to the conventional and narrow conceptions of the ancients. We are all right as far as we go, our work may be incomplete, but it is not false; and it is far better, far less injurious to the mind,

§ 28. The average standing of the English school.

that we should be little attracted to the sky, and taught to be satisfied with a light suggestion of truthful form, than that we should be drawn to it by violently pronounced outline and intense colour, to find in its finished falsehood everything to displease or to mislead—to hurt our feelings, if we have foundation for them, and corrupt them, if we have none.

CHAPTER IV.

OF TRUTH OF CLOUDS: THIRDLY, OF THE REGION OF
THE RAIN CLOUD.

THE clouds which I wish to consider as characteristic of the lower, or rainy region, differ not so much in their real nature from those of the central and uppermost regions, as in appearance, owing to their greater nearness. For the central clouds, and perhaps even the high cirri, deposit moisture, if not distinctly rain, as is sufficiently proved by the existence of snow on the highest peaks of the Himaleh, and when, on any such mountains, we are brought into close contact with the central clouds,* we find them little differing from the ordinary rain cloud of the plains, except by being slightly less dense and dark. But the apparent differences, dependent on proximity, are most marked and important.

In the first place, the clouds of the central region have, as has been before observed, pure and aerial greys for their dark sides, owing to their necessary distance from the observer; and as this distance permits a multitude of local phenomena capable of influencing colour,

§ 1. The apparent difference in character between the lower and central clouds is dependent chiefly on proximity.

§ 2. Their marked differences in colour.

* I am unable to say to what height the real rain-cloud may extend; perhaps there are no mountains which rise altogether above storm. I have never been in a violent storm at a greater height than between 8,000 and 9,000 feet above the level of the sea. There the rain-cloud is exceedingly light, compared to the ponderous darkness of the lower air.

such as accidental sunbeams, refractions, transparencies, or local mists and showers, to be collected into a space apparently small, the colours of these clouds are always changeful and palpitating, and whatever degree of grey or of gloom may be mixed with them is invariably pure and ærial. But the nearness of the rain-cloud rendering it impossible for a number of phenomena to be at once visible, makes its hue of grey monotonous, and (by losing the blue of distance) warm and brown compared to that of the upper clouds. This is especially remarkable on any part of it which may happen to be illumined, which is of a brown, bricky, ochreous tone, never bright, always coming in dark outline even on the more subdued lights of the central clouds. But it is seldom that this takes place, and when it does, never over large spaces, little being usually seen of the rain-cloud but its under and dark side. This, when the cloud above is dense, becomes of an inky and cold grey, and sulphureous and lurid if there be thunder in the air.

§ 3. And in definiteness of form.

With these striking differences in colour, it presents no fewer nor less important in form, chiefly from losing almost all definiteness of character and outline. It is sometimes nothing more than a thin mist, whose outline cannot be traced, rendering the landscape locally indistinct or dark; if its outline be visible, it is ragged and torn; rather a spray of cloud, taken off its edge and sifted by the wind, than an edge of the cloud itself. In fact, it rather partakes of the nature, and assumes the appearance of real water in the state of spray, than of elastic vapour. This appearance is enhanced by the usual presence of formed rain, carried along with it in a columnar form, ordinarily, of course, reaching the ground like a veil, but very often suspended with the cloud, and hanging from it like a jagged fringe, or over it in light, rain being always lighter than the cloud it falls from. These columns, or fringes, of rain are often

waved and bent by the wind, or twisted, sometimes even swept upwards from the cloud. The velocity of these vapours, though not necessarily in reality greater than that of the central clouds, appears greater, owing to their proximity, and, of course, also to the usual presence of a more violent wind. They are also apparently much more in the power of the wind, having less elastic force in themselves; but they are precisely subject to the same great laws of form which regulate the upper clouds. They are not solid bodies borne about with the wind, but they carry the wind with them, and cause it; they are the visible form of the wind itself. Every one knows, who has ever been out in a storm, that the time when it rains heaviest is precisely the time when he cannot hold up his umbrella; that the wind is carried with the cloud, and lulls when it has passed. Every one who has ever seen rain in a hill country, knows that a rain-cloud, like any other, may have all its parts in rapid motion, and yet, as a whole, remain in one spot. I remember once, when in crossing the Tête Noire, I had turned up the valley towards Trient, I noticed a rain cloud forming on the Glacier de Trient. With a west wind, it proceeded towards the Col de Balme, being followed by a prolonged wreath of vapour, always forming exactly at the same spot over the glacier. This long, serpent-like line of cloud went on at a great rate till it reached the valley leading down from the Col de Balme, under the slate rocks of the Croix de Fer. There it turned sharp round, and came down this valley, at right angles to its former progress, and finally directly contrary to it, till it came down within five hundred feet of the village, where it disappeared; the line behind always advancing, and always disappearing, at the same spot. This continued for half an hour, the long line describing the curve of a horse-shoe; always coming into existence, and always vanishing at exactly the same places; traversing the space between with enormous

§ 4. They are subject to precisely the same great laws.

swiftness. This cloud, ten miles off, would have looked like a perfectly motionless wreath, in the form of a horse-shoe, hanging over the hills.

§ 5. Value, to the painter, of the rain cloud.

To the region of the rain-cloud belong also all those phenomena of drifted smoke, heat-haze, local mists in the morning or evening, in valleys, or over water, mirage, white steaming vapour rising in evaporation from moist and open surfaces, and everything which visibly affects the condition of the atmosphere without actually assuming the form of cloud. These phenomena are as perpetual in all countries as they are beautiful, and afford by far the most effective and valuable means which the painter possesses, for modification of the forms of fixed objects. The upper clouds are distinct and comparatively opaque, they do not modify, but conceal; but through the rain-cloud, and its accessory phenomena, all that is beautiful may be made manifest, and all that is hurtful concealed; what is paltry may be made to look vast, and what is ponderous, ærial; mystery may be obtained without obscurity, and decoration without disguise. And accordingly, nature herself uses it constantly, as one of her chief means of most perfect effect; not in one country, nor another, but everywhere—everywhere at least, where there is anything worth calling landscape. I cannot answer for the desert of the Sahara, but I know that there can be no greater mistake than supposing that delicate and variable effects of mist and rain-cloud are peculiar to northern climates. I have never seen in any place or country such perfect effects of mists as in the Campagna of Rome, and among the hills of Sorrento. It is therefore matter of no little marvel to me, and I conceive that it can scarcely be otherwise to any reflecting person, that throughout the whole range of ancient landscape art, there occurs no instance of the painting of a real rain-cloud, still less of any of the more delicate phenomena characteristic of

§ 6. The old masters have not left a single instance of the painting of the rain cloud, and very few efforts at it. Gaspar Poussin's storms.

the region. "Storms" indeed, as the innocent public persist in calling such abuses of nature and abortions of art as the two windy Gasparis in our National Gallery, are common enough; massive concretions of ink and indigo, wrung and twisted very hard, apparently in a vain effort to get some moisture out of them; bearing up courageously and successfully against a wind whose effects on the trees in the foreground can be accounted for only on the supposition that they are all of the Indian-rubber species. Enough of this in all conscience, we have, and to spare; but as to the legitimate rain-cloud, with its ragged and spray-like edge, its veily transparency, and its columnar burden of blessing, neither it, nor anything like it, or approaching it, occurs in any painting of the old masters that I have ever seen, and I have seen enough to warrant my affirming that if it occur anywhere, it must be through accident rather than intention. Nor is there stronger evidence of any perception on the part of these much respected artists, that there were such things in the world as mists or vapours. If a cloud under their direction, ever touches a mountain, it does it effectually and as if it meant to do it. There is no mystifying the matter, here is a cloud, and there is a hill, if it is to come on at all, it comes on to some purpose, and there is no hope of its ever going off again. We have, therefore, little to say of the efforts of the old masters, in any scenes which might naturally have been connected with the clouds of the lowest region, except that the faults of form specified in considering the central clouds, are, by way of being energetic or sublime, more glaringly and audaciously committed in their "storms,"—that what is a wrong form among clouds possessing form, is there given with increased generosity of fiction to clouds which have no form at all, and that the result, however admirable or desirable it may perhaps, on principles hitherto undeveloped, be hereafter proved, is in all

cases, and from all hands, as far as the representation of nature is concerned, something which only ought not to amuse by its absurdity, because it ought to disgust by its falsehood.

§ 7. The great power of the moderns in this respect. Works of Stanfield.

Supposing that we had nothing to show in modern art, of the region of the rain cloud, but the dash of Cox, the blot of De Wint, the spongy breadth of Cattermole, or even the ordinary stormy skies of the body of our inferior water-colour painters, we might yet laugh all efforts of the old masters to utter scorn. The works of Stanfield, here, as in all other points, based on perfect knowledge, would enable us to illustrate almost every circumstance of storm, and should be our text book, were it not that all he has done has been farther carried by a mightier hand. But one, among our water-colour artists, deserves especial notice—before we ascend the steps of the solitary throne—as having done in his peculiar walk, what for faithful and pure truth, truth indeed of a limited range and unstudied application, but yet most faithful and most pure, will remain unsurpassed if not unrivalled,—Copley Fielding. We are well aware how much of what he has done depends in a great degree upon particular tricks of execution, or on a labour somewhat too mechanical to be meritorious; that it is rather the *texture* than the *plan* of his sky which is to be admired, and that the greater part of what is pleasurable in it will fall rather under the head of dextrous imitation than of definite thought. But whatever detractions from his merit we may be compelled to make on these grounds, in considering art as the embodying of beauty, or the channel of mind, it is impossible, when we are speaking of truth only, to pass by his down scenes and moorland showers of some five or six years ago. Since that time, we fear, he has been thinking of himself, instead of nature, and has partly lost both nature and himself; but he then produced some of the most perfect and faultless pas-

§ 8. And of Copley Fielding.

sages of the external, obvious, and lower* truths of the mist and the rain cloud, which art has ever seen. Wet, transparent, formless, full of motion, felt rather by their shadows on the hills than by their presence in the sky, becoming dark only through increased depth of space, most translucent where most sombre, and light only through increased buoyancy of motion, letting the blue through their interstices, and the sunlight through their chasms, with the irregular playfulness and traceless gradation of nature herself, his skies left nothing to be desired, but an umbrella, and must remain, as long as their colours stand, among the most simple, unadulterated, and complete transcripts of a particular nature which art can point to. Had he painted five instead of five hundred such, and gone on to other sources of beauty, he might, there can be little doubt, have been one of our greatest artists. But it often grieves us to see how his power is limited to a particular moment, to that easiest moment for imitation, when knowledge of form may be superseded by management of the brush, and the judgment of the colourist by the manufacture of a colour, the moment when all form is melted down and drifted away in the descending veil of rain, and when the variable and fitful colours of the heaven are lost in the monotonous grey of its storm tones; so surely as Copley Fielding attempts the slightest hint at cloud form, beyond the edgeless rag which is tossed and twisted in the drift of the rain, does he become liny, hard, and expressionless,—so surely as he leaves the particular greys and browns whose harmony can scarcely be imperfect, and attempts the slightest passage of real colour, much more when he plunges into the difficulties of elaborate and elevated composition, does he become affected, false, and feeble. We can only account for this by supposing that there is

§ 9. His peculiar truth.

§ 10. His weakness, and its probable cause.

* External and obvious, as being mere truths of imitation—statements of the materials and means of nature, not of her mind.

something radically wrong in his method of study, for a man of his evident depth of feeling and pure love of truth ought not to be, cannot be, except from some strange error in his mode of out-of-door practice, thus limited in his range, and liable to decline of power. We have little doubt that almost all such failures arise from the artist's neglecting the use of the chalk, and supposing that either the power of drawing forms, or the sense of their beauty, can be maintained unweakened or unblunted, without constant and laborious studies in simple light and shade, of form only. The brush is at once the artist's greatest aid and enemy; it enables him to make his power available, but at the same time, it undermines his power, and unless it be constantly rejected for the pencil, never can be rightly used. But whatever the obstacle be, we do not doubt that it is one which, once seen, may be overcome or removed, and we are in the constant hope of seeing this finely-minded artist shake off his lethargy, break the shackles of habit, seek in extended and right study the sources of real power, and become, what we have full faith in his capability of being, one of the leading artists of his time.

§ 11. Impossibility of reasoning on the rain clouds of Turner from engravings.

In passing to the works of our greatest modern master, it must be premised that the qualities which constitute a most essential part of the truth of the rain cloud, are in no degree to be rendered by engraving. Its indefiniteness of torn and transparent form is far beyond the power of even our best engravers: I do not say beyond their *possible* power, if they would make themselves artists as well as workmen, but far beyond the power they actually possess; while the depth and delicacy of the greys which Turner employs or produces, as well as the refinement of his execution, are, in the nature of things, utterly beyond all imitation by the opaque and lifeless darkness of the steel. What we say of his works, therefore, must be understood as referring only to the original

drawings, though we may name one or two instances in which the engraver has, to a certain degree, succeeded in distantly following the intention of the master.

"Jumieges," in the Rivers of France, ought perhaps, after what we have said of Fielding, to be our first object of attention, because it is a rendering by Turner of Fielding's particular moment, and the only one existing, for Turner never repeats himself. One picture is allotted to one truth; the statement is perfectly and gloriously made, and he passes on to speak of a fresh portion of God's revelation.* The haze of sunlit rain of this most magnificent picture, the gradual retirement of the dark wood into its depth, and the sparkling and evanescent light which sends its variable flashes on the abbey, figures, foliage, and foam, require no comment—they speak home at once; but let it be especially observed how we have, added to all this, just where the rainbow melts away, the wreath of swift and delicate cloud-form, left in decisive light, which Fielding could only have rendered in darkness, and even then with little more than the bare suggestion of imperfect outline; while Turner has given us, in every flake, a separate study of beautiful and substantial form. But there is yet added to this noble composition an incident which may serve us at once for a farther illustration of the nature and forms of cloud, and for a final proof how deeply and philosophically Turner has studied them.

We have on the right of the picture, the steam and the smoke of a passing steamboat. Now steam is nothing but an artificial cloud in the process of dissipation, it is as much a cloud as those of the sky itself, that is, a quantity of moisture rendered visible in the air by imperfect solution. Accordingly, observe how exquisitely irregular and broken are its forms, how sharp and spray-like, but with all the facts observed

§ 12. His rendering of Fielding's particular moment in the "Jumieges."

§ 13. Illustration of the nature of clouds in the opposed forms of smoke and steam.

* Compare Sect. I. Chap. IV. § 5.

which were pointed out in Chap. II. of this Section, the convex side to the wind, the sharp edge on that side, the other soft and lost. Smoke, on the contrary, is an actual substance existing independently in the air, a solid opaque body, subject to no absorption nor dissipation but that of tenuity. Observe its volumes; there is no breaking up nor disappearing here; the wind carries its elastic globes before it, but does not dissolve nor break them.* Equally convex and void of angles on all sides, they are the exact representatives of the clouds of the old masters, and serve at once to show the ignorance and falsehood of these latter, and the accuracy of study which has guided Turner to the truth.

§ 13. Moment of retiring rain in the "Llanthony."

From this picture we should pass to the "Llanthony,"† which is the rendering of the moment immediately following that given in the "Jumieges." The shower is here half exhausted, half passed by, the last drops are rattling faintly through the glimmering hazel boughs, the white torrent, swelled by the sudden storm, flings up its hasty jets of springing spray to meet the returning light, and these, as if the heaven regretted what it had given, and were taking it back, pass, as they leap, into vapour, and fall not again, but vanish in the shafts of the sunlight,‡ that hurrying, fitful, wind-woven sun-

* It does not do so until the volumes lose their density by inequality of motion, and by the expansion of the warm air which conveys them. They are then, of course, broken into forms resembling those of clouds.

† No conception can be formed of this picture from the engraving. It is perhaps the most marvellous piece of execution and of grey colour existing, except perhaps the drawing presently to be noticed, "Land's End." Nothing else can be set beside it, even of Turner's own works—much less of any other man's.

‡ I know no effect more strikingly characteristic of the departure of a storm than the *smoking* of the mountain torrents. The exhausted air is so thirsty of moisture, that every jet of spray is seized upon by it, and converted into vapour as it springs, and this vapour rises so densely from the surface of the stream as to give it the exact appearance of boiling water. I have seen the whole course of the Arve at Chamonix

light, which glides through the thick leaves and paces along the pale rocks like rain, half conquering, half quenched by the very mists which it summons itself from the lighted pastures as it passes, and gathers out of the drooping herbage and from the streaming crags, sending them with messages of peace to the far summits of the yet unveiled mountains whose silence is still broken by the sound of the rushing rain.

With this noble work we should compare one of which we can better judge by the engraving—the “Loch Coriskin,” in the illustrations to Scott, because it introduces us to another and a most remarkable instance of the artist’s vast and varied knowledge. When rain falls on a mountain composed chiefly of barren rocks, their surfaces, being violently heated by the sun, whose most intense warmth always precedes rain, occasion sudden and violent evaporation, actually converting the first shower into steam. Consequently, upon all such hills, on the commencement of rain, white volumes of vapour are instantaneously and universally formed, which rise, are absorbed by the atmosphere, and again descend in rain, to rise in fresh volumes until the surfaces of the hills are cooled. Where there is grass or vegetation, this effect is diminished; where there is foliage it scarcely takes place at all. Now this effect has evidently been especially chosen by Turner for “Loch Coriskin,” not only because it enabled him to relieve its jagged forms with veiling vapour, but to tell the tale which no pencilling could, the story of its utter absolute barrenness of unlichened, dead, desolated rock :

The wildest glen, but this, can show
Some touch of nature’s genial glow,

one line of dense cloud, dissipating as soon as it had risen ten or twelve feet from the surface, but entirely concealing the water from an observer placed above it.

§ 14. And of
commencing,
chosen with
peculiar mean-
ing for “Loch
Coriskin.”

On high Benmore green mosses grow,
 And heath bells bud in deep Glencoe,
 And copse on Cruchan Ben ;
 But here, above, around, below,
 On mountain, or in glen,
 Nor tree, nor plant, nor shrub, nor flower,
 Nor aught of vegetative power,
 The wearied eye may ken ;
 But all is rocks at random thrown,
 Black waves, bare crags, and banks of stone.

Lord of the Isles, Canto III.

Here again, we see the absolute necessity of scientific and entire acquaintance with nature, before this great artist can be understood. That which, to the ignorant, is little more than an unnatural and meaningless confusion of steam-like vapour, is to the experienced such a full and perfect expression of the character of the spot, as no means of art could have otherwise given.

§ 16. The drawing of transparent vapour in the "Land's End."

The "Long Ships Lighthouse, Land's-End," is, perhaps, a finer instance of the painting of the rain-cloud than any yet given. Taken as a whole, it is, perhaps, the noblest drawing of Turner's existing. The engraving is good, as a plate, but conveys not the slightest idea of the original. We have here clouds without rain—at twilight—enveloping the cliffs of the coast, but concealing nothing, every outline being visible through their gloom; and not only the outline—for it is easy to do this—but the *surface*. The bank of rocky coast approaches the spectator inch by inch, felt clearer and clearer as it withdraws from the garment of cloud—not by edges more and more defined, but by a surface more and more unveiled. We have thus the painting, not of a mere transparent veil, like Fielding's rain, but of a solid body of cloud, every inch of whose increasing distance is marked and felt. But the great wonder of the picture is the intensity of gloom which is attained in pure warm grey, without either blackness or blueness. It is a gloom, dependent rather on

the enormous space and depth indicated, than on actual pitch of colour, distant by real drawing, without a grain of blue, dark by real substance, without a stroke of blackness; and with all this, it is not formless, but full of indications of character, wild, irregular, shattered, and indefinite—full of the energy of storm, fiery in haste, and yet flinging back out of its motion the fitful swirls of bounding drift, of tortured vapour tossed up like men's hands, as in defiance of the tempest, the jets of resulting whirlwind, hurled back from the rocks into the face of the coming darkness; which, beyond all other characters mark the raised passion of the elements. It is this untraceable, unconnected, yet perpetual form—this fulness of character absorbed in the universal energy—which distinguish nature and Turner from all their imitators. To roll a volume of smoke before the wind, to indicate motion or violence by monotonous similarity of line and direction, is for the multitude; but to mark the independent passion, the tumultuous separate existence of every wreath of writhing vapour, yet swept away and overpowered by one omnipotence of storm, and thus to bid us

§ 17. The individual character of its parts.

Be as a Presence or a motion—one
 Among the many there—while the mists
 Flying, and rainy vapours, call out shapes
 And phantoms from the crags and solid earth,
 As fast as a musician scatters sounds
 Out of an instrument,—

this belongs only to nature and to him.

The drawing of "Coventry" may be particularised as a farther example of this fine suggestion of irregularity and fitfulness, through very constant parallelism of direction, both in rain and clouds. The great mass of cloud, which traverses the whole picture, is characterised throughout by severe right lines, nearly parallel with each other, into which every one of its wreaths has a tendency to range itself; but no one of these right lines

§ 18. Deep studied form of swift rain-cloud in the "Coventry."

is actually and entirely parallel to any other, but all have a certain tendency, more or less defined in each, which impresses the mind with the most distinct *idea* of parallelism. Neither are any of the lines actually straight and unbroken; on the contrary, they are all made up of the most exquisite and variable curves, and it is the imagined line which joins the apices of these—a tangent to them all, which is in reality straight.* They are suggested, not represented, right lines; but the whole volume of cloud is visibly and totally bounded by them; and, in consequence, its whole body is felt to be dragged out and elongated by the force of the tempest which it carries with it, and every one of its wreaths to be (as was before explained) not so much something borne *before* or *by* the wind, as the visible form and presence of the wind itself. We could not possibly point out a more magnificent piece of drawing as a contrast to such works of Salvator as that before alluded to (159 Dulwich Gallery). Both are rolling masses of connected cloud; but in Turner's, there is not one curve that repeats another, nor one curve in itself monotonous, nor without character, and yet every part and portion of the cloud is rigidly subjected to the same straightforward, inevitable influence of storm. In Salvator's, every curve repeats its neighbour, every curve is monotonous in itself, and yet the whole cloud is curling about hither and thither, evidently without the slightest notion where it is going to, and unregulated by any general influence whatsoever. I could not bring together two finer or more instructive examples, the one of every thing that is perfect, the other of every thing that is childish or abominable, in the representation of the same facts.

§ 19. Compared with forms given by Salvator.

§ 20. Entire expression of tempest by minute touches and circumstances in the "Coventry."

But there is yet more to be noticed in this noble sky of Turner's. Not only are the lines of the rolling cloud thus irregular in their parallelism, but those of the falling rain are equally varied in their direction, indicating the

* Note especially the dark uppermost outline of the mass.

gusty changefulness of the wind, and yet kept so straight and stern in their individual descent, that we are not suffered to forget its strength. This impression is still farther enhanced by the drawing of the smoke, which blows every way at once, yet turning perpetually in each of its swirls back in the direction of the wind, but so suddenly and violently, as almost to assume the angular lines of lightning. Farther, to complete the impression, be it observed that all the cattle, both upon the near and distant hill-side, have left off grazing, and are standing stock still and stiff, with their heads down and their backs to the wind; and finally, that we may be told not only what the storm is, but what it has been, the gutter at the side of the road is gushing in a complete torrent, and particular attention is directed to it by the full burst of light in the sky being brought just above it, so that all its waves are bright with the reflection.

Find me such a magnificent statement of all truth as this among the old masters, and I will say their works are worth something. But I have not quite done with this noble picture yet. Impetuous clouds, twisted rain, flickering sunshine, fleeting shadow, gushing water, and oppressed cattle, all speak the same story of tumult, fitfulness, power, and velocity. Only one thing is wanted, a touch of repose to contrast with it all, and it is given. High and far above the dark volumes of the swift rain-cloud, are seen on the left, through their opening, the quiet, horizontal, silent flakes of the highest cirrus, resting in the repose of the deep sky. Of all else that we have noticed in this drawing, some faint idea can be formed from the engraving; but not the slightest of the delicate and soft forms of these pausing vapours, and still less of the exquisite depth and palpitating tenderness of the blue with which they are islanded.

§ 21. Especially by contrast with a passage of extreme repose.

§ 22. The truth of this particular passage. Perfectly pure blue sky only seen after rain, and how seen.

To appreciate the full truth of this passage, we must understand another effect peculiar to the rain cloud, that its openings always exhibit the purest and most perfect blue which the sky ever shows. For, as we saw in the first chapter of this section, that aqueous vapour always turns the sky more or less grey, it follows that we never can see the azure so intense or perfect as when the greater part of this vapour has just fallen in rain. Then, and then only, pure blue sky becomes visible in the first openings, distinguished especially by the manner in which the clouds melt into it, their edges passing off in faint white threads and fringes, through which the blue shines more and more intensely, till the last trace of vapour is lost in its perfect colour. It is only the upper white clouds, however, which do this, or the last fragments of rain-clouds, becoming white as they disappear, so that the blue is never *corrupted* by the cloud, but only paled and broken with pure white, the purest white which the sky ever shows. Thus we have a melting and palpitating colour, never the same for two inches together, deepening and broadening here and there into intensity of perfect azure, then drifted and dying away through every tone of pure pale sky, into the snow white of the filmy cloud. Over this roll the determined edges of the rain-clouds, throwing it all far back, as a retired scene, into the upper sky. Of this effect the old masters, as far as I remember, have taken no cognizance whatsoever; all with them is, as we partially noticed before, either white cloud or pure blue, they have no notion of any double dealing or middle measures. They bore a hole in the sky, and let you up into a pool of deep, stagnant blue, marked off by the clear round edges of imperturbable, impenetrable cloud on all sides—beautiful in positive colour, but totally destitute of that exquisite gradation and change, that fleeting, panting, hesitating effort, with which the first

§ 23. Absence of this effect in the works of the old masters.

glance of the natural sky is shed through the turbulence of the earth-storm.

They have some excuse, however, for not attempting this in the nature of their material, as one accidental dash of the brush with water-colour on a piece of wet or damp paper, will come nearer the truth and transparency of this rain-blue than the labour of a day in oils; and the purity and felicity of some of the careless, melting water-colour skies of Cox and Tayler may well make us fastidious in all effects of this kind. It is, however, only in the drawings of Turner that we have this perfect transparency and variation of blue given, in association with the perfection of considered form. In Taylor and Cox the forms are always partially accidental and unconsidered, often essentially bad, and always incomplete; in Turner the dash of the brush is as completely under the rule of thought and feeling as its slowest line; all that it does is perfect, and could not be altered even in a hair's-breadth without injury; in addition to this, peculiar management and execution are used in obtaining quality in the colour itself, totally different from the manipulation of any other artist, and none, who have ever spent so much as one hour of their lives over his drawing, can forget those dim passages of dreamy blue, barred and severed with a thousand delicate and soft and snowy forms, which gleaming in their patience of hope between the troubled rushing of the racked earth-cloud, melt farther and farther back into the height of heaven, until the eye is bewildered and the heart lost in the intensity of their peace. I do not say that this is beautiful—I do not say it is ideal, nor refined—I only ask you to watch for the first opening of the clouds after the next south rain, and tell me if it be not *true*?

The "Gosport" affords us an instance more exquisite even than the passage above named in the "Co-

§ 24. Success of our water-colour artists in its rendering. Use of it by Turner.

§ 25. Expression of near rain-cloud in

the "Gosport,"
and other
works.

§ 26. Contrast-
ed with Gas-
par Poussin's
rain cloud in
the "Dido and
Encas."

ventry," of the use of this melting and dewy blue, accompanied by two distances of rain cloud, one towering over the horizon, seen blue with excessive distance through crystal atmosphere; the other breaking overhead in the warm, sulphurous fragments of spray, whose loose and shattering transparency, being the most essential characteristic of the near rain cloud, are precisely that which the old masters are sure to contradict. Look, for instance, at the wreaths of *cloud?* in the "Dido and Eneas" of Gaspar Poussin, with their unpleasant edges cut as hard and solid and opaque and smooth as thick black paint can make them, rolled up over one another like a dirty sail badly reefed, or look at the agreeable transparency and variety of the cloud-edge where it cuts the mountain in N. Poussin's "Phocion," and compare this with the wreaths which float across the precipice in the second vignette in Campbell, or which gather around the "Ben Lomond," the white rain gleaming beneath their dark transparent shadows, or which drift up along the flanks of the wooded hills, called from the river by the morning light, in the "Okehampton," or which island the crags of Snowdon in the "Llanberis," or melt along the Cumberland hills, while Turner leads us across the sands of Morecambe Bay. This last drawing deserves especial notice; it is of an evening in spring, when the south rain has ceased at sunset, and, through the lulled and golden air, the confused and fantastic mists float up along the hollows of the mountains, white and pure, the resurrection in spirit of the new-fallen rain, catching shadows from the precipices, and mocking the dark peaks with their own mountain-like but melting forms till the solid mountains seem in motion like those waves of cloud, emerging and vanishing as the weak wind passes by their summits, while the blue, level night advances along the sea, and the surging breakers leap up to catch the last light from the path of the sunset.

I need not, however, insist upon Turner's peculiar power of rendering *mist*, and all those passages of intermediate mystery, between earth and air, when the mountain is melting into the cloud, or the horizon into the twilight, because his supremacy in these points is altogether undisputed, except by persons to whom it would be impossible to prove anything which did not fall under the form of a Rule of Three. Nothing is more natural than that the studied form and colour of this great artist should be little understood, because they require for the full perception of their meaning and truth, such knowledge and such time as not one in a thousand possesses, or can bestow; but yet the truth of them for that very reason is capable of demonstration, and there is hope of our being able to make it in some degree felt and comprehended even by those to whom it is now a dead letter, or an offence. But the aërial and misty effects of landscape, being matters of which the eye should be simply cognizant, and without effort of thought, as it is of light, must, where they are exquisitely rendered, either be felt at once, or prove that degree of blindness and bluntness in the feelings of the observer which there is little hope of ever conquering,—that want of communication between the senses and the soul, which at once incapacitates from all real pleasure in nature, or understanding of art. Of course for persons who have never seen in their lives a cloud vanishing on a mountain side, and whose conceptions of mist or vapour are limited to ambiguous outlines of spectral hackney-coaches and bodiless lamp-posts, discerned through a brown combination of sulphur, soot, and gas-light, there is yet some hope; we cannot indeed tell them what the morning mist is like in mountain air, but far be it from us to tell them that they are incapable of feeling its beauty if they will seek it for themselves. But if you have ever in your life had one opportunity, with your eyes and heart open, of

§ 27. Turner's power of rendering mist.

§ 28. His effects of mist so perfect, that if not at once understood, they can no more be explained or reasoned on than nature herself.

seeing the dew rise from a hill-pasture, or the storm gather on a sea-cliff, and if you yet have no feeling for the glorious passages of mingled earth and heaven which Turner calls up before you into breathing, tangible being, there is indeed no hope for your apathy—art will never touch you, nor nature inform.

§ 29. Various instances.

It would be utterly absurd, among the innumerable passages of this kind given throughout his works, to point to one as more characteristic or more perfect than another. The “Simmer Lake, near Askrig,” for expression of mist pervaded with sunlight,—the “Lake Lucerne,” a recent and unengraved drawing, for the recession of near mountain form, not into dark, but into *luminous* cloud, the most difficult thing to do in art,—the “Harlech,” for expression of the same phenomena, shown over vast spaces in distant ranges of hills,—the “Ehrenbreitstein,” a recent drawing, for expression of mist, rising from the surface of water at sunset,—and, finally, the glorious “Oberwesel and Nemi,”* for passages of all united, may, however, be named, as noble instances, though in naming five works I insult five hundred.

§ 30. Turner’s more violent effects of tempest are never rendered by engravers.

One word respecting Turner’s more violent storms, for we have hitherto been speaking only of the softer rain-clouds, associated with gusty tempest, but not of the thunder-cloud and the whirlwind. If there be any one point in which engravers disgrace themselves more than in another, it is in their rendering of dark and furious storm. It appears to be utterly impossible to force it into their heads that an artist does *not* leave his colour with a sharp edge and an angular form by accident, or that they may have the pleasure of altering it and improving upon it, and equally impossible to persuade them that energy and gloom may in *some* circumstances be arrived at without any extraordinary expenditure of

* In the possession of B. G. Windus, Esq. of Tottenham.

ink. I am aware of no engraver of the present day whose ideas of a storm-cloud are not comprised under two heads—roundness and blackness; and, indeed, their general principles of translation (as may be distinctly gathered from their larger works) are the following:—

1. Where the drawing is grey, make the paper black.
2. Where the drawing is white, cover the paper with zig-zag lines.
3. Where the drawing has particularly tender tones, cross-hatch them.
4. Where any outline is particularly angular, make it round.
5. Where there are vertical reflections in water, express them with very distinct horizontal lines.
6. Where there is a passage of particular simplicity, treat it in sections.
7. Where there is any thing intentionally concealed, make it out.—Yet, in spite of the necessity which all engravers impose upon themselves, of rigidly observing this code of general laws, it is difficult to conceive how such pieces of work, as the plates of “Stonehenge” and “Winchelsea,” can ever have been presented to the public,

§ 31. General system of landscape engraving.

as in any way resembling, or possessing even the most fanciful relation to the Turner drawings of the same subjects. The original of the “Stonehenge” is perhaps the standard of storm-drawing, both for the overwhelming power and gigantic proportions and spaces of its cloud forms, and for the tremendous qualities of lurid and sulphurous colours which are gained in them.

§ 32. The storm in the “Stonehenge.”

All its forms are marked with violent angles, as if the whole muscular energy—so to speak—of the cloud, were writhing in every fold, and their fantastic and fiery volumes have a peculiar horror—an awful life—shadowed out in their strange, swift, fearful outlines, which oppress the mind more than even the threatening of their gigantic gloom. The white lightning, not as it is drawn by less observant or less capable painters, in zig-zag fortifications, but in its own dreadful irregularity of streaming fire, is brought down, not merely over the dark clouds, but through the full light of an

illuminated opening to the blue, which yet cannot abate the brilliancy of its white line, and the track of the last flash along the ground is fearfully marked by the dog howling over the fallen shepherd, and the ewe pressing her head upon the body of her dead lamb.

§ 33. General character of such effects as given by Turner. His expression of falling rain.

I have not space, however, to enter into examination of Turner's storm-drawing; I can only warn the public against supposing that its effect is ever rendered by engravers. The great principles of Turner are angular outline, vastness and energy of form, infinity of gradation, and depth without blackness. The great principles of the engravers (*vide* "Pæstum," in Rogers' Italy, and the "Stonehenge" above alluded to) are rounded outline, no edges, want of character, equality of strength, and blackness without depth.

§ 34. Recapitulation of the section.

I have scarcely, I see, on referring to what I have written, sufficiently insisted on Turner's rendering of the rainy *fringe*, whether in distances, admitting or concealing more or less of the extended plain, as in the "Waterloo," and "Richmond" (with the girl and dog in the foreground), or as in the "Dunstaffnage," "Glencoe," "St. Michael's Mount," and "Slave-ship," not reaching the earth, but suspended in waving and twisted lines from the darkness of the zenith. But I have no time for further development of particular points; I must defer discussion of them until we take up each picture to be viewed as a whole, for the division of the sky which I have been obliged to make, in order to render fully understood the peculiarities of character in the separate cloud regions, prevents my speaking of any one work with justice to its concentration of various truth. Be it always remembered that we pretend not, at present, to give any account or idea of the sum of the works of any painter, much less of the universality of Turner's; but only to explain in what real truth, as far as it is explicable, consists, and to illustrate it by those pictures in which it most distinctly occurs, or from which it is most

visibly absent. And it will only be in the full and separate discussion of individual works, when we are acquainted also with what is beautiful, that we shall be completely able to prove or disprove the presence of the truth of nature.

The conclusion, then, to which we are led by our present examination of the truth of clouds, is that the old masters attempted the representation of only one among the thousands of their systems of scenery, and were altogether false in the little they attempted; while we can find records in modern art of every form or phenomenon of the heavens, from the highest film that glorifies the æther to the wildest vapour that darkens the dust, and in all these records, we find the most clear language and close thought, firm words and true message, unstinted fulness and unflinching faith.

And indeed it is difficult for us to conceive how, even without such laborious investigation as we have gone through, any person can go to nature for a single day or hour, when she is really at work in any of her nobler spheres of action, and yet retain respect for the old masters; finding, as find he will, that every scene which rises, rests, or departs before him, bears with it a thousand glories of which there is not one shadow, one image, one trace or line, in any of their works; but which will illustrate to him, at every new instant, some passage which he had not before understood in the high works of modern art. Stand upon the peak of some isolated mountain at day-break, when the night mists first rise from off the plains, and watch their white and lake-like fields as they float in level bays and winding gulfs about the islanded summits of the lower hills, untouched yet by more than dawn, colder and more quiet than a windless sea under the moon of midnight; watch when the first sunbeam is sent upon the silver channels, how the foam of their undulating surface parts and passes away; and down under their depths, the

§ 35. Sketch of a few of the skies of nature, taken as a whole, compared with the works of Turner and of the old masters. Morning on the plains.

§ 36. Noon
with gathering
storms.

glittering city and green pasture lie like Atlantis, between the white paths of winding rivers, the flakes of light falling every moment faster and broader among the starry spires, as the wreathed surges break and vanish above them, and the confused crests and ridges of the dark hills shorten their grey shadows upon the plain.* Has Claude given this? Wait a little longer, and you shall see those scattered mists rallying in the ravines, and floating up towards you, along the winding valleys, till they couch in quiet masses, iridescent with the morning light,† upon the broad breasts of the higher hills, whose leagues of massy undulation will melt back and back into that robe of material light, until they fade away, lost in its lustre, to appear again above, in the serene heaven, like a wild, bright, impossible dream, foundationless and inaccessible, their very bases vanishing in the unsubstantial and mocking blue of the deep lake below.‡ Has Claude given this? Wait yet a little longer, and you shall see those mists gather themselves into white towers, and stand like fortresses along the promontories, massy and motionless, only piled with every instant higher and higher into the sky,§ and casting longer shadows athwart the rocks; and out of the pale blue of the horizon you will see forming and advancing a troop of narrow, dark, pointed vapours,|| which will cover the sky, inch by inch, with their grey network, and take the light off the landscape with an eclipse which will stop the singing of the birds and the motion of the leaves together, and then you will see

* Vignette to Milton—"Temptation on the Mountain."

† I have often seen the white, thin, morning cloud, edged with the seven colours of the prism. I am not aware of the cause of this phenomenon, for it takes place not when we stand with our backs to the sun, but in clouds near the sun itself, irregularly and over indefinite spaces, sometimes taking place in the body of the cloud. The colours are distinct and vivid, but have a kind of metallic lustre upon them.

‡ Lake Lucerne.

§ St. Maurice (Rogers's Italy.)

|| Vignette, the "Great St. Bernard."

horizontal bars of black shadow forming under them, and lurid wreaths create themselves, you know not how, along the shoulders of the hills; you never see them form, but when you look back to a place which was clear an instant ago, there is a cloud on it, hanging by the precipices, as a hawk pauses over his prey.* Has Claude given this? And then you will hear the sudden rush of the awakened wind, and you will see those watch-towers of vapour swept away from their foundations, and waving curtains of opaque rain let down to the valleys, swinging from the burdened clouds in black, bending fringes,† or pacing in pale columns along the lake level, grazing its surface into foam as they go. And then, as the sun sinks, you shall see the storm drift for an instant from off the hills, leaving their broad sides smoking, and loaded yet with snow-white, torn, steam-like rags of capricious vapour, now gone, now gathered again,‡ while the mouldering sun, seeming not far away, but burning like a red-hot ball beside you, and as if you could reach it, plunges through the rushing wind and rolling cloud with headlong fall, as if it meant to rise no more, dying all the air about it with blood.§ Has Claude given this? And then you shall hear the fainting tempest die in the hollow of the night, and you shall see a green halo kindling on the summit of the eastern hills,|| brighter—brighter yet, till the large white circle of the slow moon is lifted up among the barred clouds,¶ step by step, line by line, star after star she quenches with her kindling light, setting in their stead an army of pale, penetrable, fleecy wreaths in the heaven, to give light upon the earth, which move together, hand in hand, company by company, troop by troop, so

§ 37. Sunset in
tempest. Se-
rene midnight.

* Vignette of the Andes.

† St. Michael's Mount—England series.

‡ Illustration to the Antiquary.

§ Vignette to Campbell's "Last Man." || Caerlaverock. ¶ St. Denis.

§ 38. And sunrise on the Alps.

measured in their unity of motion, that the whole heaven seems to roll with them, and the earth to reel under them. Ask Claude, or his brethren, for that ; and then wait yet for one hour, until the East again becomes purple,* and the heaving mountains, rolling against it in darkness, like waves of a wild sea, are drowned one by one in the glory of its burning ; watch the white glaciers blaze in their winding paths about the mountains, like mighty serpents with scales of fire, watch the columnar peaks of solitary snow, kindling downwards chasm by chasm, each in itself a new morning ; their long avalanches cast down in keen streams brighter than the lightning, sending each his tribute of driven snow, like altar-smoke, up to the heaven ; the rose-light of their silent domes flushing that heaven about them and above them, piercing with purer light through its purple lines of lifted cloud, casting a new glory on every wreath as it passes by, until the whole heaven—one scarlet canopy—is interwoven with a roof of waving flame, and tossing, vault beyond vault, as with the drifted wings of many companies of angels ; and then, when you can look no more for gladness, and when you are bowed down with fear and love of the Maker and Doer of this, tell me who has best delivered this His message unto men !

* Alps at Day-break (Rogers' Poems) ; Delphi, and various vignettes.

CHAPTER V.

EFFECTS OF LIGHT RENDERED BY MODERN ART.

I HAVE before given my reasons (Sect. II. Chap. III.) for not wishing at present to enter upon the discussion of particular effects of light. Not only are we incapable of rightly viewing them, or reasoning upon them, until we are acquainted with the principles of the beautiful; but, as I distinctly limited myself, in the present portion of the work, to the examination of *general* truths, it would be out of place to take cognizance of the particular phases of light, even if it were possible to do so, before we have some more definite knowledge of the material objects which they illustrate. I shall therefore at present, merely set down a rough catalogue of the effects of light, at different hours of the day, which Turner has represented: naming a picture or two, as an example of each, which we will hereafter take up one by one, and consider the physical science and the feeling together. And I do this, in the hope that in the meantime, some admirer of the old masters will be kind enough to select from the works of any one of them, a series of examples of the same effects, and to give me a reference to the pictures, so that I may be able to compare each with each; for, as my limited knowledge of the works of Claude or Poussin does not quite supply me with the requisite variety of effect, I shall be really grateful for assistance.

The following list, of course, does not name the hundredth part of the effects of light given by Turner; it

§ 1. Reasons for merely, at present, naming, without examining the particular effects of light rendered by Turner.

§ 2. Hopes of the author for assistance in the future investigation of them.

only names those which are distinctly and markedly separate from each other, and representative each of an entire class. Ten or twelve examples, often many more, might be given of each, every one of which would display the effects of the same hour and light, modified by different circumstances of weather, situation, and character of objects subjected to them, and especially, by the management of the sky; but it will be generally sufficient for our purposes to examine thoroughly one good example of each.

The prefixed letters express the direction of the light. F. front light (the sun in the centre, or near the top of the picture); L. lateral light, the sun out of the picture on the right or left of the spectator; L. F. the light partly lateral, partly fronting the spectator, as when he is looking south, with the sun in the south-west; L. B., light partly lateral, partly behind the spectator, as when he is looking north, with the sun in the north-west.

MORNING.

| EFFECTS. | NAMES OF PICTURES. |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| L....An hour before sunrise in winter. Violent storm, with rain, on the sea. Light-houses seen through it. | Lowestoffe, Suffolk. |
| F....An hour before sunrise. Serene sky, with light clouds. New moon. Dawn in the distance. | Vignette to "Voyage of Columbus." |
| L....Ten minutes before sunrise. Violent storm. Torchlight. | Fowey Harbour. |
| F....Sunrise. Sun only half above the horizon. Clear sky, with light cirri. | Vignette to "Human Life." |
| F....Sun just disengaged from horizon. Misty, with light cirri. | Alps at Day-break. |
| F....Sun a quarter of an hour risen. Six o'clock, in summer, by gun from guard-ship. Sky covered with scarlet clouds. | Margate, Castle Upnor. |
| L. F...Serene sky. Sun emerging from a bank of cloud on horizon, a quarter of an hour risen. | Orford, Suffolk. |
| L. F...Same hour. Light mists in flakes on hill sides. Clear air. | Skiddaw. |
| L. F.—Light flying rain clouds gathering in valleys. Same hour. | Oakhampton. |
| L. B...Same hour. A night storm rising off the mountains. Dead calm. | Lake of Geneva. |

EFFECTS.

- L. Sun half an hour risen. Cloudless sky.
 L. Same hour. Light mists lying in the valleys.
 F. Same hour. Bright cirri. Sun dimly seen
 through battle smoke, with conflagration.
 L. Sun an hour risen. Cloudless and clear.

NAMES OF PICTURES.

- Beaugency.
 Kirby Lonsdale.
 Hohenlinden.
 Buckfastleigh.

NOON AND AFTERNOON.

- L. B. ... Mid-day. Dead calm, with heat. Cloudless.
 L. Same hour. Serene and bright, with streaky
 clouds.
 L. Same hour. Serene, with multitudes of the
 high cirrus.
 L. Bright sun, with light wind and clouds.
 F. Two o'clock. Clouds gathering for rain, with
 heat.
 F. Rain beginning, with light clouds and wind.
 L. Soft rain, with heat.
 L. F. ... Great heat. Thunder gathering.
 L. Thunder breaking down, after intense heat,
 with furious wind.
 L. Violent rain and wind, but cool.
 L. F. ... Furious storm, with thunder.
 L. B. ... Thunder retiring, with rainbow. Dead calm,
 with heat.
 L. About three o'clock, summer. Air very cool
 and clear. Exhausted thunder-clouds low
 on hills.
 F. Descending sun-beams, through soft clouds,
 after rain.
 L. Afternoon, very clear, after rain. A few clouds
 still on horizon. Dead calm.
 F. Afternoon of cloudless day, with heat.

- Corinth.
 Lantern at St. Cloud.
 Shylock, and other Venices.
 Richmond, Middlesex.
 Warwick. Blenheim.
 Piacenza.
 Caldron Snout Fall.
 Malvern.
 Winchelsea.

- Llanberis, Coventry, &c.
 Stonehenge, Pæstum, &c.
 Nottingham.

Bingen.

Carew Castle.

Salt Ash.

Mercury and Argus. Ober-
 wesel. Nemi.

EVENING.

- L. An hour before sunset. Cloudless.
 F. Half an hour before sunset. Light clouds.
 Misty air.
 F. Within a quarter of an hour of sunset. Mists
 rising. Light cirri.
 L. F. ... Ten minutes before sunset. Quite cloudless.
 F. Same hour. Tumultuous spray of illumined
 rain cloud.
 F. Five minutes before sunset. Sky covered
 with illumined cirri.
 L. B. ... Same hour. Serene sky. Full moon rising.

- Trematon Castle.
 Lake Albano. Florence.
 Datur Hora Quieti.
 Durham.
 Solomon's Pools. Slave-ship.
 Temeraire. Napoleon. Vari-
 ous vignettes.
 Kenilworth.

EFFECTS.

- F....Sun setting. Detached light cirri and clear air.
- L....Same hour. Cloudless. New moon in zenith.
- L.F...Same hour. Heavy storm clouds. Moon rise.
- L.B...Sun just set. Sky covered with clouds. New moon rising.
- L.B...Sun five minutes set. Strong twilight, with storm clouds. Full moon rise.
- L.B...Same hour. Serene, with light clouds.
- L.B...Same hour. Serene. New moon high in the sky.
- L.B...Sun a quarter of an hour set. Cloudless.
- L.F...Sun half an hour set. Light cirri.
- F....Same hour. Dead calm at sea. New moon and evening star.
- F....Sun three quarters of an hour set. New moon struggling through storm clouds, over heavy sea.

NAMES OF PICTURES.

- Amboise.
- Troyes.
- First vignette, "Pleasures of Memory."
- Caudebec.
- Wilderness of Engedi. Assos.
- Montjan.
- Pyramid of Caius Cestius.
- Chateau de Blois.
- Clairmont.
- Cowes.
- Folkestone.

NIGHT.

- F....An hour after sunset. No moon. Torch-light.
- F....Same hour. New moon rising. Fire from furnaces.
- L.F...Same hour, with storm clouds. New moon rising.
- L....Same hour, with light of rockets, and fire.
- F....Midnight. Moonless, with light-houses.
- Same hour, with fire-light.
- F....Ditto. Full moon. Clear air, with delicate clouds. Light-houses.
- F....Ditto, with conflagration, battle smoke, and storm.
- F....Ditto. New moon, with mist, and lamp-light.
- F....Ditto. Full moon, with halo. Light rain clouds.
- F....Full moon. Perfectly serene. Sky covered with white cirri.

- St. Julien. Tours.
- Dudley.
- Mantes.
- Juliet and her Nurse.
- Calais.
- Burning of Parliament Houses.
- Towers of the Heve.
- Waterloo.
- Vignette. Derwent Water.
- St. Denis.
- Alnwick. Vignette of Rialto, and Bridge of Sighs.

SECTION IV.

OF TRUTH OF EARTH.

CHAPTER I.

OF GENERAL STRUCTURE.

By truth of earth, we mean the faithful representation of the facts and forms of the bare ground, considered as entirely divested of vegetation, through whatever disguise, or under whatever modification may be occasioned by the clothing of the landscape. Ground is to the landscape painter what the naked human body is to the historical. The growth of vegetation, the action of water, and even of clouds upon it and around it, are so far subject and subordinate to its forms, as the folds of the dress and the fall of the hair are to the modulation of the animal anatomy. Nor is this anatomy always so concealed, but in all sublime compositions, whether of nature or art, it must be seen in its naked purity. The laws of the organization of the earth are distinct and fixed as those of the animal frame, simpler and broader, but equally authoritative and inviolable. Their results may be arrived at without knowledge of the interior mechanism; but for that very reason ignorance of them is the more disgraceful, and violation of them more unpardonable. They are in the landscape the foundation of all other truths—the most necessary,

§ 1. First laws of the organization of the earth, and their importance in art.

therefore, even if they were not in themselves attractive ; but they are as beautiful as they are essential, and every abandonment of them by the artist must end in deformity as it begins in falsehood.

§ 2. The slight attention ordinarily paid to them. Their careful study by modern artists.

That such abandonment is constant and total in the works of the old masters, has escaped detection, only because not one in a hundred of persons generally cognizant of art, have spent time enough in hill countries to perceive the certainty of the laws of hill anatomy ; and because not one in a hundred, even of those who possess such opportunities, ever think of the common earth beneath their feet, as any thing possessing specific form, or governed by steadfast principles. That such abandonment should have taken place cannot be surprising, after what we have seen of their fidelity to skies. Those artists who, day after day, could so falsely represent what was for ever before their eyes, when it was to be one of the most important and attractive parts of their picture, can scarcely be expected to give with truth what they could see only partially and at intervals, and what was only to be in their picture a blue line in the horizon, or a bright spot under the feet of their figures.

That such should be all the space allotted by the old landscape painters to the most magnificent phenomena of nature ; that the only traces of those Apennines, which in Claude's walks along the brow of the Pincian, for ever bounded his horizon with thier azure wall, should, in his pictures, be a cold white outline in the extreme of his tame distance ; and that Salvator's sojourns among their fastnesses should only have taught him to shelter his banditti with such paltry morsels of crag as an Alpine stream would toss down before it like a foam-globe ; though it may indeed excite our surprise, will, perhaps, when we have seen how these slight passages are executed, be rather a subject of congratulation than of regret. It might, indeed, have shortened

our labour in the investigation of mountain truth, had not modern artists been so vast, comprehensive, and multitudinous in their mountain drawings, as to compel us, in order to form the slightest estimate of their knowledge, to enter into full examination of every variety of hill scenery. We shall first gain some general notion of the broad organization of the large masses, and then take those masses to pieces, until we come down to the crumbling soil of the foreground.

Mountains are, to the rest of the body of the earth, what violent, muscular action is to the body of man. The muscles and tendons of its anatomy are, in the mountain, brought out with fierce and convulsive energy, full of expression, passion, and strength; the plains and the lower hills are the repose and the effortless motion of the frame, when its muscles lie dormant and concealed beneath the lines of its beauty, yet ruling those lines in their every undulation. This, then, is the first grand principle of the truth of the earth. The spirit of the hills is action; that of the lowlands, repose; and between these there is to be found every variety of motion and of rest; from the inactive plain, sleeping like the firmament, with cities for stars, to the fiery peaks, which, with heaving bosoms and exulting limbs, with the clouds drifting like hair from their bright foreheads, lift up their Titan hands to Heaven, saying, "I live for ever!"

§ 3. General structure of the earth. The hills are its action, the plains its rest.

But there is this difference between the action of the earth, and that of a living creature, that while the exerted limb marks its bones and tendons through the flesh, the excited earth casts off the flesh altogether, and its bones come out from beneath. Mountains are the bones of the earth, their highest peaks are invariably those parts of its anatomy which in the plains lie buried under five-and-twenty thousand feet of solid thickness of superincumbent soil, and which spring up in the mountain ranges in vast pyramids or wedges,

§ 4. Mountains come out from underneath the plains, and are their support.

flinging their garment of earth away from them on each side. The masses of the lower hills are laid over and against their sides, like the masses of lateral masonry against the skeleton arch of an unfinished bridge, except that they slope up to and lean against the central ridge; and, finally, upon the slopes of these lower hills are strewed the level beds of sprinkled gravel, sand, and clay, which form the extent of the champaign. Here then is another grand principle of the truth of earth, that the mountains must come from under all, and be the support of all; and that every thing else must be laid in their arms, heap above heap, the plains being the uppermost. Opposed to this truth is every appearance of the hills being laid upon the plains, or built upon them. Nor is this a truth only of the earth on a large scale, for every minor rock (in position) comes out from the soil about it as an island out of the sea, lifting the earth near it like waves beating on its sides.

§ 5. Structure
of the plains
themselves.
Their perfect
level, when de-
posited by quiet
water.

Such being the structure of the framework of the earth, it is next to be remembered that all soil whatsoever, wherever it is accumulated in greater quantity than is sufficient to nourish the moss or the wallflower, has been so, either by the direct transporting agency of water, or under the guiding influence and power of water. All plains capable of cultivation are deposits from some kind of water—some from swift and tremendous currents, leaving their soil in sweeping banks and furrowed ridges—others, and this is in mountain districts almost invariably the case, by slow deposit from a quiet lake in the mountain hollow, which has been gradually filled by the soil carried into it by streams, which soil is of course finally left spread at the exact level of the surface of the former lake, as level as the quiet water itself. Hence we constantly meet with plains in hill districts, which fill the hollows of the hills with as perfect and faultless a level as water, and out

of which the steep rocks rise at the edge with as little previous disturbance, or indication of their forms beneath, as they do from the margin of a quiet lake. Every delta—and there is one at the head of every lake in every hill-district—supplies an instance of this. The rocks at Altorf plunge beneath the plain, which the lake has left, at as sharp an angle as they do into the lake itself beside the chapel of Tell. The plain of the Arve, at Sallenche, is terminated so sharply by the hills of the Voga, that I have seen a man sleeping with his back supported against the mountain, and his legs stretched on the plain; the slope which supported his back rising 5000 feet above him, and the couch of his legs stretched for five miles before him. In distant effect these champaigns lie like deep blue undisturbed water, while the mighty hills around them burst out from beneath, raging and tossing like a tumultuous sea. The valleys of Meyunger, Interlachen, Altorf, Sallenche, St. Jean de Maurienne; the great plain of Lombardy itself, as seen from Milan or Padua, under the Alps, the Eugovians, and the Apennines, the Campo Felice under Vesuvius, are a few, out of the thousand instances, which must occur at once to the mind of every traveller.

If what I have said has been well understood, I need now only bid the reader open Rogers's Italy, at the 17th page, and look at the vignette which heads it of the "Battle of Marengo." It needs no comment. It cannot but carry with it, after what has been said, the instant conviction that Turner is as much of a geologist as he is of a painter. It is a summary of all we have been saying, and a summary so distinct and clear, that without any such explanation it must have forced upon the mind the impression of such facts—of the plunging of the hills underneath the plain—of the perfect level and repose of this latter laid in their arms, and of the tumultuous action of the emergent summits.

§ 6. Illustrated
by Turner's
"Marengo."

§ 7. General divisions of formation resulting from this arrangement. Plan of investigation.

We find, according to this its internal structure, which I believe, with the assistance of Turner, can scarcely now be misunderstood, that the earth may be considered as divided into three great classes of formation, which geology has already named for us. Primary—the rocks, which, though in position lower than all others, rise to form the central peaks, or interior nuclei of all mountain ranges. Secondary—the rocks which are laid in beds above these, and which form the greater proportion of all hill scenery. Tertiary—the light beds of sand, gravel, and clay, which are strewed upon the surface of all, forming plains and habitable territory for man. We shall find it convenient, in examining the truth of art, to adopt, with a little modification, the geological arrangement, considering, first, the formation and character of the highest or central peaks; then the general structure of the lower mountains, including in this division those composed of the various slates which a geologist would call primary; and, lastly, the minutiae and most delicate characters of the beds of these hills, when they are so near as to become foreground objects, and the structure of the common soil which usually forms the greater space of an artist's foreground. Hence our task will arrange itself into three divisions—the investigation of the central mountains, of the inferior mountains, and of the foreground.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE CENTRAL MOUNTAINS.

It does not always follow, because a mountain is the highest of its group, that it is in reality one of the central range. The Jungfrau is only surpassed in elevation, in the chain of which it is a member, by the Schreckhorn and Finster-Aar-horn; but it is entirely a secondary mountain. But the central mountains are most usually the highest, and may be considered as the chief component parts of all mountain scenery in the snowy regions.—Being composed of the same rocks in all countries, their external character is the same everywhere. Its chief essential points are the following.

Their summits are almost invariably either pyramids or wedges. Domes may be formed by superincumbent snow, or appear to be formed by the continuous outline of a sharp ridge seen transversely, with its precipice to the spectator; but wherever a rock appears, the uppermost termination of that rock will be a steep edgy ridge, or a sharp point, very rarely presenting even a gentle slope on any of its sides, but usually inaccessible unless encumbered with snow.

These pyramids and wedges split vertically, or nearly so, giving smooth faces of rock, either perpendicular or very steeply inclined, which appear to be laid against the central wedge or peak, like planks against a wall. The surfaces of these indicate very close parallelism; their fissures are vertical, and cut them smoothly, like

§ 1. Similar character of the central peaks in all parts of the world.

§ 2. Their arrangements in pyramids or wedges, divided by vertical fissures.

the edges of shaped planks. Often groups of these planks, if I may so call them, rise above those between them and the central ridge, forming detached ridges inclining towards the central one. The planks are cut transversely, sometimes by graceful curvilinear fissures; sometimes by straight fissures, which are commonly parallel to the slope of one of the sides of the peak, while the main direction of the planks or leaves is parallel to that of its other side, or points directly to its summit. But the *universal* law of fracture is—first, that it is clean and sharp, having a perfectly smooth surface, and a perfectly sharp edge to all the fissures; secondly, that every fissure is steeply inclined, and that a horizontal line, or one approaching to it, is an impossibility, except in some turn of a curve.

§ 3. Causing groups of rock resembling an artichoke or rose.

Hence, however the light may fall, these peaks are seen marked with sharp and defined shadows, indicating the square edges of the planks of which they are made up, which shadows sometimes are vertical, pointing to the summit; but are oftener parallel to one of the sides of the peak, and intersected by a second series, parallel to the other side. Where there has been much disintegration, the peak is often surrounded with groups of lower ridges or peaks, like the leaves of an artichoke or a rose, all evidently part and parcel of the great peak; but falling back from it, as if it were a budding flower, expanding its leaves one by one.

§ 4. The faithful statement of these facts by Turner in his "Alps at daybreak."

Now, if I were giving a lecture on geology, and were searching for some means of giving the most faithful idea possible of the external appearance caused by this structure of the primary hills, I should throw my geological outlines aside, and take up Turner's vignette of the "Alps at daybreak." After what has been said, a single glance at it will be enough. Observe the exquisite decision with which the edge of the uppermost plank of the great peak is indicated by its clear dark side and sharp shadow; then the rise of the second low ridge on its side, only to descend again precisely in

the same line; the two fissures of this peak, one pointing to its summit, the other rigidly parallel to the great slope which descends towards the sun; then the sharp white *aiguille* on the right, with the great fissure from its summit, rigidly and severely square, as marked below, where another edge of rock is laid upon it. But this is not all; the black rock in the foreground is equally a member of the mass, its chief slope parallel with that of the mountain, and all its fissures and lines inclined in the same direction; and, to complete the mass of evidence more forcibly still, we have the dark mass on the left articulated with absolute right lines, as parallel as if they had been drawn with a ruler, indicating the tops of two of these huge plates or planks, pointing, with the universal tendency, to the great ridge, and intersected by fissures parallel to it. Throughout the extent of mountain, not one horizontal line, nor an approach to it, is discernible. This cannot be chance—it cannot be composition—it may not be beautiful—perhaps nature is very wrong to be so parallel, and very disagreeable in being so straight;—but this *is* nature, whether we admire it or not. It is such a concentration of Alpine truth as could only have been put together by one as familiar with these snowy solitudes as their own eagles.

In the vignette illustration to “Jacqueline,” we have another series of peaks, whose structure is less developed, owing to their distance, but equally clear and faithful in all points, as far as it is given. But the vignette of “Aosta,” in the Italy, is perhaps more striking than any that could be named for its rendering of the perfect parallelism of the lower and smaller peaks with the great lines of the mass they compose, and that of the “Andes,” the second in Campbell, for its indication of the multitudes of the vertical and plank-like beds arranged almost like the leaves of a flower. This last especially, one of the very noblest, most faithful, most

§ 5. Vignette of the Andes and others.

scientific statements of mountain form which even Turner has ever made, can leave little more to be said or doubted.

§ 6. Necessary distance, and consequent aërial effect on all such mountains.

Now whenever these vast peaks, rising from 12 to 24,000 feet above the sea, form part of anything like a landscape, that is to say whenever the spectator beholds them from the region of vegetation, or even from any distance at which it is possible to get something like a view of their whole mass, they must be at so great a distance from him as to become aërial and faint in all their details. Their summits, and all those higher masses of whose character we have been speaking, can by no possibility be nearer to him than twelve or fifteen miles; to approach them nearer he must climb—must leave the region of vegetation, and must confine his view to a part, and that a very limited one, of the mountain he is ascending. Whenever, therefore, these mountains are seen over anything like vegetation, or are seen in mass, they *must* be in the far distance. Most artists would treat an horizon fifteen miles off very much as if it were mere air; and though the greater clearness of the upper air permits the high summits to be seen with extraordinary distinctness, yet they never can by any possibility have dark or deep shadows, or intense dark relief against a light. Clear they may be, but faint they must be, and their great and prevailing characteristic, as distinguished from other mountains, is want of apparent solidity. They rise in the morning light rather like sharp shades, cast up into the sky, than solid earth. Their lights are pure, roseate, and cloud-like—their shadows transparent, pale, and opalescent, and often indistinguishable from the air around them, so that the mountain-top is seen in the heaven only by its flakes of motionless fire.

§ 7. Total want of any rendering of their phenomena in ancient art.

Now, let me once more ask, though I am sufficiently tired of asking, what record have we of anything like this in the works of the old masters? There is no

vestige in any existing picture of the slightest effort to represent the high hill-ranges; and as for such drawing of their forms as we have found in Turner, we might as well look for them among the Chinese. Very possibly it may be all quite right,—very probably these men showed the most cultivated taste, the most unerring judgment, in filling their pictures with mole-hills and sand-heaps. Very probably the withered and poisonous banks of Avernus, and the sand and cinders of the Campagna, are much more sublime things than the Alps; but still what limited truth it is, if truth it be, when through the last fifty pages we have been pointing out fact after fact, scene after scene, in clouds and hills (and not individual facts nor scenes, but great and important classes of them), and still we have nothing to say when we come to the old masters; but, “they are not here.” Yet this is what we hear so constantly called painting “general” nature.

But open at the 145th page of Rogers’ Poems. I said little of this vignette just now, when talking of structure, that I might insist upon it more forcibly, as a piece of effect. Of all the pieces of mountain elevation that ever were put on paper, perhaps this is the most soaring and impressive. I know nothing comparable to it for enormous size and infinite atmosphere. The dreamy faintness of their mighty strength, the perfect stillness and silence of their distant sleep, and the fulness of sunlight in which they are bathed and lost, bear away the mind with them like a deep melody; and through all this—through the ærial dimness out of which they rise like spectres, are told the facts and forms which speak for their reality like their own echoes. For instance, the highest range of rock on the extreme left is precisely the place where, in nature, there would be a little plateau or level, retiring back to the foot of the supreme summit, and as surely as there would be such a level, a kind of breathing time in the mountain before

I § 8. The perfection of Turner’s vignette to “Jacqueline.”

§ 9. Its peculiar expression of Alpine facts.

it made its last spring, so surely would that little plain be loaded with a glacier, so surely would that glacier advance to the brow of the precipice, and so surely would it hang over it, in the white tongue which in the vignette descends over the precipice exactly under the highest snowy peak. Now they are these little touches of exquisite, deep, and finished truth, which mark the vastness of Turner's intellect; they are just those which never can be generally appreciated, owing to the unavoidable want of the knowledge required to meet them. Observe how much this single bit of white tells us: it tells us that there is a glacier above those cliffs, of consistence and size; it tells us, therefore, that there is a comparatively level space on which the fallen snow can accumulate, and it tells us, therefore, that the white summits are a mile or two farther back than the rocks below them, and to make all this doubly clear, the black moraine invariably left by the falling snow at the edge of such a plain, where it first alights, is marked by the dark line crossing, nearly horizontally, under the central peak. All this speaks home at once, if we have but knowledge enough to understand it; and, be it remembered, this same white and dark touch would be equally a dead letter to us in nature herself, if we had not. A person among the Alps for the first time in his life, would probably not even notice the little tongue of ice hanging over the precipice, much less would he comprehend how much it told. It could only be some one long acquainted with mountains who would tell you the width of the plateau, and how many chamois were likely to be upon it. I might name many other works of Turner, in which the same deep Alpine truth is carried out; but this alone would be sufficient to prove his unapproached superiority, at least over the ancients. What the moderns have done we shall see presently.

Although, however, there is no vestige among the old masters of any effort to represent the attributes of the higher mountains seen in comparative proximity, we are not altogether left without evidence of their having thought of them as sources of light in the extreme distance, as, for example, in that of the reputed Claude in our National Gallery, called the "Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca." I have not the slightest doubt of its being a most execrable copy; for, whether it be Claude's or not, there is not one touch nor line of even decent painting in the whole picture; but as connoisseurs have considered it a Claude, as it has been put in our Gallery for a Claude, and as people admire it every day for a Claude, I may at least presume it has those qualities of Claude in it which are wont to excite the public admiration, though it possesses none of those which sometimes give him claim to it; and I have so reasoned, and shall continue to reason upon it, especially with respect to facts of form, which cannot have been much altered by the copyist. In the distance of that picture (as well as in that of the "Sinon before Priam," which I have little doubt is at least partially original, and whose central group of trees is a very noble piece of painting) is something white, which I believe must be intended for a snowy mountain, because I do not see that it can well be intended for anything else. Now no mountain of elevation sufficient to be so sheeted with perpetual snow, can by any possibility sink so low on the horizon as this something of Claude's, unless it be at a distance of from fifty to seventy miles. At such distances, though the outline is invariably sharp and edgy to an excess, yet all the circumstances of aerial perspective, faintness of shadow, and isolation of light, which I have described as characteristic of the Alps fifteen miles off, take place, of course, in a threefold degree; the mountains rise from the horizon like transparent films, only distinguishable from mist by their excessively

§ 10. Character of the representations of Alps in the distances of Claude.

§ 11. Their total want of magnitude and aerial distance.

keen edges, and their brilliant flashes of sudden light; they are as unsubstantial as the air itself, and impress their enormous size by means of this ærialness, in a far greater degree at these vast distances, than even when towering above the spectator's head. Now, I ask of the candid observer, if there be the smallest vestige of an effort to attain—if there be the most miserable, the most contemptible shadow of attainment, of such an effect by Claude? Does that white thing on the horizon look seventy miles off? Is it faint, or fading, or to be looked for by the eye before it can be found out? Does it look high? does it look large? does it look impressive? You cannot but feel that there is not a vestige of any kind or species of truth in that horizon; and that, however artistical it may be, as giving brilliancy to the sky (though, as far as I have any feeling in the matter, it only gives coldness), it is, in the very branch of art on which Claude's reputation chiefly rests, ærial perspective, hurling defiance to nature in her very teeth.

§ 12. And violation of specific form.

But there are worse failures yet in this unlucky distance. I do not consider ærial perspective as a matter of paramount importance, because I have known nature infringe its laws herself, and boldly too, though never in a case like this before us; but there are some laws which nature never violates,—her laws of form. No mountain was ever raised to the level of perpetual snow, without an infinite multiplicity of form. Its foundation is built of a hundred minor mountains, and, from these, great buttresses run in converging ridges to the central peak. There is no exception to this rule, no mountain 15,000 feet high is ever raised without such preparation and variety of outwork. Consequently, in distant effect, when chains of such peaks are visible at once, the multiplicity of form is absolutely oceanic; and though it is possible in near scenes to find vast and simple masses composed of lines which run unbroken for a thousand feet, or more, it is physically impossible when these

masses are thrown seventy miles back, to have simple outlines, for then these large features become mere jags and hillocks, and are heaped and huddled together with endless confusion. To get a simple form, seventy miles away, mountain lines would be required unbroken for leagues; and this, I repeat, is physically impossible. Hence these mountains of Claude, having no indication of the steep vertical summits which we have shown to be the characteristic of the central ridges; having soft edges instead of decisive ones, simple forms (one line to the plain on each side) instead of varied and broken ones, and being painted with a crude raw white, having no transparency, nor firmness, nor air in it, instead of rising in the opalescent mystery which invariably characterizes the distant snows, have the forms and the colours of heaps of chalk in a lime-kiln, not of Alps. They are destitute of energy, of height, of distance, of splendour and of variety, and are the work of a man, whether Claude or not, who had neither feeling for nature, nor knowledge of art.

I should not, however, insist upon the faults of this picture, believing it to be a copy, if I had ever seen, even in his most genuine works, an extreme distance of Claude with any of the essential characters of nature. But although in his better pictures we have always beautiful drawing of the *air*, which in the copy before us is entirely wanting, the real features of the extreme mountain distance are equally neglected or maligned in all. There is, indeed, air between us and it; but ten miles, not seventy miles, of space. Let us observe a little more closely the practice of nature in such cases.

The multiplicity of form which I have shown to be necessary in the outline, is not less felt in the body of the mass. For, in all extensive hill ranges, there are five or six lateral chains separated by deep valleys, which rise between the spectator and the central ridge, showing their tops one over another, wave beyond

§ 13. Even in his best works.

§ 14. Farther illustration of the distant character of mountain chains.

wave, until the eye is carried back to the faintest and highest forms of the principal chain. These successive ridges, and I speak now not merely of the Alps, but of mountains generally, even as low as 3000 feet above the sea, show themselves in extreme distance, merely as vertical shades, with very sharp outlines, detached from one another by greater intensity, according to their nearness. It is with the utmost difficulty that the eye can discern any solidity or roundness in them; the lights and shades of solid form are both equally lost in the blue of the atmosphere, and the mountain tells only as a flat, sharp-edged film, of which multitudes intersect and overtop one another, separated by the greater faintness of the retiring masses. This is the most simple and easily imitated arrangement possible, and yet, both in nature and art, it expresses distance and size in a way otherwise quite unattainable. For thus, the whole mass of one mountain being of one shade only, the smallest possible difference in shade will serve completely to detach it from another, and thus ten or twelve distances may be made evident, when the darkest and nearest is an aërial grey as faint as the sky; and the beauty of such arrangements carried out as nature carries them, to their highest degree, is, perhaps, the most striking feature connected with hill scenery: you will never, by any chance, perceive in extreme distance, anything like solid form or projection of the hills. Each is a dead, flat, perpendicular film or shade, with a sharp edge darkest at the summit, and lost as it descends, and about equally dark whether turned towards the light or from it, but commonly a little—a very little darker and more distinct on the side towards the light; and of these successive films of mountain you will probably have half a dozen, one behind another, all showing with perfect clearness their every chasm and peak in the outline, and not one of them showing the slightest vestige of solidity, but on the contrary, look-

§ 15. Their
excessive ap-
pearance of
transparency.

ing so thoroughly transparent, that if it so happens, as I have seen frequently, that a conical near hill meets with its summit the separation of two distant ones, so that the right-hand slope of the nearer hill forms an apparent continuation of the right hand slope of the left hand farther hill, and vice versa, it is impossible to get rid of the impression that one of the more distant peaks is seen *through* the other.

I may point out in illustration of these facts, the engravings of two drawings of precisely the same chain of distant hills,—Stanfield's "Borromean Islands," with the St. Gothard in the distance, and Turner's "Arona," also with the St. Gothard in the distance. Far be it from me to indicate the former of these plates as in any way exemplifying the power of Stanfield, or affecting his reputation; it is an unlucky drawing, murdered by the engraver, and as far from being characteristic of Stanfield as it is from being like nature, but it is just what I want, to illustrate the particular error of which I speak, and I prefer showing this error where it accidentally exists in the works of a really great artist, standing there alone, to pointing it out where it is confused with other faults and falsehoods in the works of inferior hands. The former of these plates is an example of everything which a hill distance is not, and the latter of everything which it is. In the former, we have the mountains covered with patchy lights, which being of equal intensity whether near or distant, confuse all the distances together, while the eye, perceiving that the light falls so as to give details of solid form, yet finding nothing but insipid and formless spaces displayed by it, is compelled to suppose that the whole body of the hills is equally monotonous and devoid of character, and the effect upon it is not one whit more impressive and agreeable than might be received from a group of sand-heaps, washed into uniformity by recent rain.

§ 16. Illustrated from the works of Turner and Stanfield. The "Borromean islands" of the latter.

§ 17. Turner's
"Arona."

Compare with this the distance of Turner in "Arona."

It is totally impossible here to say which way the light falls on the distant hills, except by the slightly increased decision of their edges turned towards it, but the greatest attention is paid to get these edges decisive, yet full of gradation, and perfectly true in character of form. All the rest of the mountain is then indistinguishable haze, and by the bringing of these edges more and more decisively over one another, Turner has given us, between the right-hand side of the picture and the snow, fifteen distinct distances, yet every one of these distances in itself palpitating, changeful, and suggesting subdivision into countless multitude. Something of this is traceable even in the engraving, and all the essential characters are perfectly well marked. I think even the least experienced eye can scarcely but feel the truth of this distance as compared with Stanfield's. In the latter, the eye gets something of the form, and therefore wonders it sees no more; the impression on it, therefore, is of hills within distinctly visible distance, indiscernible through want of light or dim atmosphere, and the effect is, of course, smallness of space, with obscurity of light and thickness of air. In Turner's, the eye gets nothing of the substance, and wonders it sees so much of the outline; the impression is, therefore, of mountains too far off to be ever distinctly seen, rendered clear by brilliancy of light and purity of atmosphere; and the effect, consequently, vastness of space, with intensity of light and crystalline transparency of air.

§ 18. Extreme
distance of
large objects
always charac-
terized by very
sharp outline.

These truths are invariably given in every one of Turner's distances, that is to say, we have always in them two principal facts forced on our notice; transparency, or filminess of mass, and excessive sharpness of edge. And I wish particularly to insist upon this sharpness of edge, because it is not a casual or changeful habit of nature, it is the unfailing characteristic of all

very great distances. It is quite a mistake to suppose that slurred or melting lines are characteristic of distant *large* objects; they may be so, as before observed, Sec. II. Chap. IV. § 4, when the focus of the eye is not adapted to them; but, when the eye is really directed to the distance, melting lines are characteristic only of thick mist and vapour between us and the object, not of the removal of the object. If a thing has character upon its outline, as a tree for instance, or a mossy stone, the farther it is removed from us, the sharper the outline of the whole mass will become, though in doing so, the particular details which make up the character will become confused in the manner described in the same chapter. A tree fifty yards from us, taken as a mass, has a soft outline, because the leaves and interstices have some effect on the eye. But put it ten miles off against the sky, and its outline will be so sharp that you cannot tell it from a rock. There are three trees on the Mont Saleve, about eight miles from Geneva, which from the city, as they stand on the ridge of the hill, are seen defined against the sky. The keenest eye in the world could not tell them from stones. So in a mountain five or six miles off, bushes, and heather, and roughnesses of knotty ground and rock, have still some effect on the eye, and by becoming confused and mingled as before described, soften the outline. But let the mountain be thirty miles off, and its edge will be as sharp as a knife. Let it, as in the case of the Alps, be seventy or eighty miles off, and though it has become so faint that the morning mist is not so transparent, its outline will be beyond all imitation for excessive sharpness. Thus, then, the character of extreme distance is always excessive keenness of edge. If you soften your outline, you either put mist between you and the object, and in doing so diminish your distance, for it is impossible you should see so far through mist as through clear air; or, if you keep an impression of clear air, you

bring the object close to the observer, diminish its size in proportion, and if the aerial colours, excessive blues, &c., be retained, represent an impossibility.

§ 19. Want of this decision in Claude.

Take Claude's distance (in No. 244, Dulwich Gallery*), on the right of the picture. It is as pure blue as ever came from the pallet, laid on thick; you cannot see through it, there is not the slightest vestige of transparency or filminess about it, and its edge is soft and blunt. Hence, if it be meant for near hills, the blue is impossible, and the want of details impossible, in the clear atmosphere indicated through the whole picture. If it be meant for extreme distance, the blunt edge is impossible, and the opacity is impossible. I do not know a single distance of the Italian school to which the same observation is not entirely applicable, except, perhaps, one or two of Nicholas Poussin's. They always involve, under any supposition whatsoever, at least two impossibilities.

§ 20. The perpetual rendering of it by Turner.

I need scarcely mention in particular any more of the works of Turner, because there is not one of his mountain distances in which these facts are not fully exemplified. Look at the last vignette—the "Farewell," in Rogers' Italy; observe the excessive sharpness of all the edges, almost amounting to lines, in the distance, while there is scarcely one decisive edge in the foreground. Look at the hills of the distance in the "Dunstaffnage," "Glencoe," and "Loch Achray" (illustrations to Scott), in the latter of which the left-hand side of the Benvenue is actually marked with a dark line. In fact, Turner's usual mode of executing these passages is perfectly evident in all his drawings; it is not often that we meet with a very broad dash of wet colour in his finished works, but in these distances, as we before saw of his shadows, all the effect has been evidently given by a dash of very moist pale colour, probably turning the paper upside down, so that a very firm edge may be left

* One of the most genuine Claudes I know.

at the top of the mountain as the colour dries. And in the "Battle of Marengo" we find the principle carried so far as to give nothing more than actual outline, for the representation of the extreme distance, while all the other hills in the picture are distinctly darkest at the edge. This plate, though coarsely executed, is yet one of the noblest illustrations of mountain character and magnitude existing.

Such, then, are the chief characteristics of the highest peaks and extreme distances of all hills, which we see that the old masters, taken as a body, usually neglected, and, if they touched, maligned. They fortunately did little, as whatever they did was wrong; and prudently affirmed little, as whatever they affirmed was false. The moderns have generally done all that they have done, well; but owing to the extreme difficulty of managing or expressing the brilliancy of snow, and the peculiar character of the vertical and severe lines, which are not, under ordinary circumstances, attractive to an artist's eye, we cannot point to so many or so various examples of truth as in other cases. But nothing can be more accurate than the knowledge, or more just than the feeling, of J. D. Harding, wherever he touches Alpine scenery; and he takes the bull by the horns far more frequently than any other of our artists. His magnificent "Wengern Alp," and his "Chamouni," engraved in the illustrations to Byron, are quite unequalled, even by Stanfield. The latter artist, indeed, we know not from what cause, fails, or at least falls short of what we should expect from him, more frequently in subjects of this kind than in anything he touches. He usually makes the snowy summits a subordinate part of his picture, and does not appear to dwell upon them with fondness or delight, but to get over them as a matter of necessity. We should almost imagine that he had never made careful studies of them, for even in the few touches that he gives, the intelligent

§ 21. Review of the Alpine drawings of modern artists generally. The great excellence of J. D. Harding.

§ 22. The apparent carelessness of Stanfield in such subjects. Fine feeling of Copley Fielding.

drawing for which he is usually so distinguished is altogether wanting. No man, however, in such subjects has suffered more from engravers; the plate of "Inspruck," in the Picturesque Annual, might have been opposed to Turner's works as an instance of want of size and dignity in Alpine masses, and want of intelligence in the drawing of the snow, the dark touches on which are altogether inexpressive; and, as there is no distinction in them of dark side from shadow, might be taken for rocks, or stains, rather than for shades indicative of form. But these parts, in the original, are delicately and justly drawn, though slightly, and have very high qualities of size and distance. We shall, however, in speaking of the lower mountains, have better grounds for dwelling on the works of this master, as well as on those of Copley Fielding, who has most genuine feeling for hill character, but has never grappled with the central summits.

§ 23. Average paintings of Switzerland. Its real spirit has scarcely yet been caught.

Various works in green and white appear from time to time on the walls of the Academy, *like* the Alps indeed, but so frightfully like, that we shudder and sicken at the sight of them, as we do when our best friend shows us into his dining-room, to see a portrait of himself, which "every body thinks very like." We should be glad to see fewer of these, for Switzerland is not only quite beyond the power of any but first-rate men, but is exceedingly bad practice for a rising artist.

In conclusion, let us express a hope that Alpine scenery will not continue to be neglected as it has been, by those who alone are capable of treating it. We love Italy, but we have had rather a surfeit of it lately;—too many peaked caps and flat-headed pines. We should be very grateful to Harding and Stanfield if they would refresh us a little among the snow, and give us, what we know them to be capable of giving us, a faithful expression of Alpine ideal. We are well aware of the difficulty of the subject-matter—well aware of the pain

inflicted on an artist's mind by the preponderance of black, and white, and green, over more available colours; but there is nevertheless in generic Alpine scenery, a fountain of feeling yet unopened—a chord of harmony yet untouched by art. It will be struck by the first man who can separate what is national, in Switzerland, from what is ideal. We do not want chalets and three-legged stools, cow-bells and buttermilk. We want the pure and holy hills, treated as a link between heaven and earth.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE INFERIOR MOUNTAINS.

§ 1. The inferior mountains are distinguished from the central, by being divided into beds.

WE have next to investigate the character of those intermediate masses which constitute the greater part of all hill scenery, forming the outworks of the high ranges, and being almost the sole constituents of such lower groups as those of Cumberland, Scotland, or south Italy.

All mountains whatsoever not composed of the granite or gneiss rocks described in the preceding chapter, nor volcanic, (these latter being comparatively rare,) are composed of *beds*, not of homogeneous, heaped materials, but of accumulated layers, whether of rock or soil. It may be slate, sandstone, limestone, gravel, or clay; but whatever the substance, it is laid in layers, not in a mass. These layers are scarcely ever horizontal, and may slope to any degree, often occurring vertical, the boldness of the hill outline commonly depending in a great degree on their inclination. In consequence of this division into beds, every mountain will have two great sets of lines more or less prevailing in its contours—one indicative of the surfaces of the beds, where they come out from under each other—and the other indicative of the extremities or edges of the beds, where their continuity has been interrupted. And these two great sets of lines will commonly be at right angles with each other, or nearly so. If the sur-

face of the bed approach a horizontal line, its termination will approach the vertical, and this is the most usual and ordinary way in which a precipice is produced.

Farther, in almost all rocks there is a third division of substance, which gives to their beds a tendency to split transversely in some directions rather than others, giving rise to what geologists call "joints," and throwing the whole rock into blocks more or less rhomboidal, so that the beds are not terminated by torn or ragged edges, but by faces comparatively smooth and even, usually inclined to each other at some definite angle. The whole arrangement may be tolerably represented by the bricks of a wall, whose tiers may be considered as strata, and whose sides and extremities will represent the joints by which those strata are divided, varying, however, their direction in different rocks, and in the same rock under differing circumstances.

Finally, in the slates, grauwackes, and some calcareous beds, in the greater number, indeed, of mountain rocks, we find another most conspicuous feature of general structure—the lines of lamination, which divide the whole rock into an infinite number of delicate plates or layers, sometimes parallel to the direction or "strike" of the strata, oftener obliquely crossing it, and sometimes, apparently, altogether independent of it, maintaining a consistent and unvarying slope through a series of beds contorted and undulating in every conceivable direction. These lines of lamination extend their influence to the smallest fragment, causing it (as, for example, common roofing slate) to break smooth in one direction, and with a ragged edge in another, and marking the faces of the beds and joints with distinct and numberless lines, commonly far more conspicuous in a near view than the larger and more important divisions.

§ 2. Farther division of these beds by joints.

§ 3. And by lines of lamination.

§ 4. Variety and seeming uncertainty under which these laws are manifested.

Now, it cannot be too carefully held in mind, in examining the principles of mountain structure, that nearly all the laws of nature with respect to external form are rather universal tendencies, evidenced by a plurality of instances, than imperative necessities complied with by all. For instance, it may be said to be a universal law with respect to the boughs of all trees that they incline their extremities more to the ground in proportion as they are lower on the trunk, and that the higher their point of insertion is, they more they share in the upward tendency of the trunk itself. But yet there is not a single group of boughs in any one tree which does not show exceptions to the rule, and present boughs lower in insertion and yet steeper in inclination than their neighbours. Nor is this defect, or deformity, but the result of the constant habit of nature to carry variety into her very principles, and make the symmetry and beauty of her laws the more felt by the grace and accidentalism with which they are carried out. No one familiar with foliage could doubt for an instant of the necessity of giving evidence of this downward tendency in the boughs, but it would be nearly as great an offence against truth to make the law hold good with every individual branch, as not to exhibit its influence on the majority. Now, though the laws of mountain form are more rigid and constant than those of vegetation, they are subject to the same species of exception in carrying out. Though every mountain has these great tendencies in its lines, not one in a thousand of those lines is absolutely consistent with and obedient to this universal tendency. There are lines in every direction, and of almost every kind, but the sum and aggregate of those lines will invariably indicate the *universal* force and influence to which they are all subjected, and of these lines there will, I repeat, be two principal sets or classes, pretty nearly at right angles with each other. When both are inclined, they

give rise to peaks or ridges, when one is nearly horizontal and the other vertical, to table lands and precipices.

This then is the broad organization of all hills, modified afterwards by time and weather, concealed by superincumbent soil and vegetation, and ramified into minor and more delicate details in a way presently to be considered, but nevertheless universal in its great first influence, and giving to all mountains a particular cast and inclination, like the exertion of voluntary power in a definite direction, an internal spirit, manifesting itself in every crag, and breathing in every slope, flinging and forcing the mighty mass towards the heaven with an expression and an energy like that of life.

Now, as in the case of the structure of the central peaks described above, so also here, if I had to give a clear idea of this organization of the lower hills, where it is seen in its greatest perfection, with a mere view to geological truth, I should not refer to any geological drawings, but I should take the "Loch Coriskin" of Turner. It has luckily been admirably engraved, and for all purposes of reasoning or form, is nearly as effective in the print as in the drawing. Looking at any group of the multitudinous lines which make up this mass of mountain, they appear to be running anywhere and everywhere; there are none parallel to each other, none resembling each other for a moment; yet the whole mass is felt at once to be composed with the most rigid parallelism, the surfaces of the beds towards the left, their edges or escarpments towards the right. In the centre, near the top of the ridge, the edge of a bed is beautifully defined, casting its shadow on the surface of the one beneath it, this shadow marking by three jags the chasms caused in the inferior one by three of its parallel joints. Every peak in the distance is evidently subject to the same great influence, and

§ 5. The perfect expression of them in Turner's "Loch Coriskin."

the evidence is completed by the flatness and evenness of the steep surfaces of the beds which rise out of the lake on the extreme right, parallel with those in the centre.

§ 6. "Glencoe,"
and other
works.

Turn to "Glencoe," in the same series, (the illustrations to Scott.) We have in the mass of mountain on the left, the most beautiful indication of vertical beds of a finely laminated rock, terminated by even joints towards the precipice, while the whole sweep of the landscape, as far as the most distant peaks, is evidently governed by one great and simple tendency upwards to the left, those most distant peaks themselves lying over one another in the same direction. In the "Daphne hunting with Leucippus," the mountains on the left descend in two precipices to the plain, each of which is formed by a vast escarpment of the beds whose upper surfaces are shown between the two cliffs, sinking with an even slope from the summit of the lowest to the base of the highest, under which they evidently descend, being exposed in this manner for a length of five or six miles. The same structure is shown, though with more complicated development, on the left of the "Loch Katrine." But perhaps the finest instance, or at least the most marked of all, will be found in the exquisite "Mount Lebanon," with the convent of St. Antonio, engraved in Finden's Bible. There is not one shade nor touch on the rock which is not indicative of the lines of stratification, and every fracture is marked with a straight-forward simplicity which makes you feel that the artist has nothing in his heart but a keen love of the pure unmodified truth; there is no effort to disguise the repetition of forms, no apparent aim at artificial arrangement or scientific grouping, the rocks are laid one above another with unhesitating decision, every shade is understood in a moment, felt as a dark side, or a shadow, or a fissure, and you may step from one block or bed to another until you reach the mountain summit.

§ 7. Especially
the "Mount
Lebanon."

And yet, though there seems no effort to disguise the repetition of forms, see how it *is* disguised, just as nature would have done it, by the perpetual play and changefulness of the very lines which appear so parallel, now bending a little up, or down, or losing themselves, or running into each other, the old story over and over again,—infinity. For here is still the great distinction between Turner's work and that of a common artist. Hundreds could have given the parallelism of blocks, but none but himself could have done so without the actual repetition of a single line or feature.

Now compare with this the second mountain from the left in the picture of Salvator, No. 220, in the Dulwich Gallery. The whole is first laid in with a very delicate and masterly grey, right in tone, agreeable in colour, quite unobjectionable for a beginning. But how is this made into rock? On the light side Salvator gives us a multitude of touches, all exactly like one another, and therefore, it is to be hoped, quite patterns of perfection in rock drawing, since they are too good to be even varied. Every touch is a dash of the brush, as nearly as possible in the shape of a comma, round and bright at the top, convex on its right side, concave on its left, and melting off at the bottom into the grey. These are laid in confusion one above another, some paler, some brighter, some scarcely discernible, but all alike in shape. Now, I am not aware myself of any particular object either in earth or heaven which these said touches do at all resemble or pourtray. I do not, however, assert that they may not resemble something — feathers, perhaps; but I do say, and say with perfect confidence, that they may be Chinese for rocks, or Sanscrit for rocks, or symbolical of rocks in some mysterious and undeveloped character; but that they are no more *like* rocks than the brush that made them. The dark sides appear to embrace and overhang the lights, they cast no shadows, are

§ 8. Compared
with the work
of Salvator.

broken by no fissures, and furnish, as food for contemplation, nothing but a series of concave curves, like those of a heap of broken plates and dishes, exhibiting on the whole as complete a piece of absurdity as ever human fingers disgraced themselves by producing.

§ 9. And of
Poussin.

And yet not quite, neither, for if we go on to No. 269, we shall find something a great deal worse. I can believe Gaspar Poussin capable of committing as much sin against nature as most people; but I certainly do not suspect him of having had any hand in this thing, at least after he was ten years old. Nevertheless, it shows what he is supposed capable of by his admirers, and will serve for a broad illustration of all those absurdities which he himself in a less degree, and with feeling and thought to atone for them, perpetually commits. Take the white bit of rock on the opposite side of the river, just above the right arm of the "Niobe," and tell me of what the square green daubs of the brush at its base can be conjectured to be typical. Rocks with pale-brown light sides, and rich green dark sides, are a phenomenon perhaps occurring in some of the improved passages of nature among our Cumberland lakes, where I remember once having seen a bed of roses, of peculiar magnificence, tastefully and artistically assisted in effect by the rocks above it being painted pink to match; but I do not think that they are a kind of thing which the clumsiness and false taste of nature can be supposed frequently to produce, even granting that these same sweeps of the brush could, by any exercise of the imagination, be conceived representative of a dark, or any other side, which is far more than I am inclined to grant, seeing that there is no cast shadow, no appearance of reflected light, of substance, or of character on the edge, nothing, in short, but pure, staring green paint, scratched heavily on a white ground. Nor is there a touch in the picture more expressive. All are the mere dragging of the

brush here and there and everywhere, without meaning or intention, winding, twisting, zigzagging, doing anything in fact which may serve to break up the light and destroy its breadth without bestowing in return one hint or shadow of anything like form. This picture is, indeed, an extraordinary case, but the Salvator above mentioned is a characteristic and exceedingly favourable example of the usual mode of mountain-drawing among the old landscape-painters. Their admirers may be challenged to bring forward a single instance of their expressing, or even appearing to have noted, the great laws of structure above explained. Their hills are, without exception, irregular earthy heaps, without energy or direction of any kind, marked with shapeless shadows and meaningless lines; sometimes, indeed, where great sublimity has been aimed at, approximating to the pure and exalted ideal of rocks, which, in the most artistical specimens of China cups and plates, we see suspended from aërial pagodas, or balanced upon peacocks' tails, but never warranting even the wildest theorist in the conjecture that their perpetrators had ever seen a mountain in their lives. Let us, however, look further into the modifications of character by which nature conceals the regularity of her first plan; for although all mountains are organized as we have seen, their organization is always modified, and often nearly concealed, by changes wrought upon them by external influence.

We ought, when speaking of their stratification, to have noticed another great law, which must, however, be understood with greater latitude of application than any of the others, as very far from imperative or constant in particular cases, though universal in its influence on the aggregate of all. It is that the lines by which rocks are terminated, are always steeper and more inclined to the vertical as we approach the summit of the mountain. Thousands of cases are to be found

§ 10. Effects of external influence on mountain form.

in every group, of rocks and lines horizontal at the top of the mountain and vertical at the bottom; but they are still the exceptions, and the average out of a given number of lines in any rock formation whatsoever, will be found increasing in perpendicularity as they rise. Consequently the great skeleton lines of rock outline are always concave, that is to say, all distant ranges of rocky mountain approximate more or less to a series of concave curves, meeting in peaks, like a range of posts with chains hanging between. I do not say that convex forms will not perpetually occur, but that the tendency of the majority will always be to assume the form of sweeping, curved valleys, with angular peaks, not of rounded convex summits, with angular valleys. This structure is admirably exemplified in the second vignette in Rogers' Italy, and in "Piacenza."

§ 11. The gentle convexity caused by aqueous erosion.

But although this is the primary form of all hills, and that which will always cut against the sky in every distant range, there are two great influences whose tendency is directly the reverse, and which modify, to a great degree, both the evidences of stratification and this external form. These are aqueous erosion and disintegration. The latter only is to be taken into consideration when we have to do with minor features of crag; but the former is a force in constant action—of the very utmost importance—a force to which one half of the great outlines of all mountains is entirely owing, and which has much influence upon every one of their details.

Now the tendency of aqueous action over a large elevated surface is *always* to make that surface symmetrically and evenly convex and dome-like, sloping gradually more and more as it descends, until it reaches an inclination of about 40° , at which slope it will descend perfectly straight to the valley; for at that slope the soil washed from above will accumulate upon the hill-side, as it cannot lie in steeper beds. This influ-

ence, then, is exercised more or less on all mountains, with greater or less effect in proportion as the rock is harder or softer, more or less liable to decomposition, more or less recent in date of elevation, and more or less characteristic in its original forms; but it universally induces, in the lower parts of mountains, a series of the most exquisitely symmetrical convex curves, terminating, as they descend to the valley, in uniform and uninterrupted slopes; this symmetrical structure being perpetually interrupted by cliffs and projecting masses, which give evidence of the interior parallelism of the mountain anatomy, but which interrupt the convex forms only by rising out of them, seldom by indentation.

There remains but one fact more to be noticed. All mountains, in some degree, but especially those which are composed of soft or decomposing substance, are delicately and symmetrically furrowed by the descent of streams. The traces of their action commence at the very summits, fine as threads, and multitudinous, like the uppermost branches of a delicate tree. They unite in groups as they descend, concentrating gradually into dark undulating ravines, into which the body of the mountain descends on each side, at first in a convex curve, but at the bottom with the same uniform slope on each side which it assumes in its final descent to the plain, unless the rock be very hard, when the stream will cut itself a vertical chasm at the bottom of the curves, and there will be no even slope. If, on the other hand, the rock be very soft, the slopes will increase rapidly in height and depth from day to day, washed away at the bottom and crumbling at the top, until, by their reaching the summit of the masses of rock which separate the active torrents, the whole mountain is divided into a series of penthouse-like ridges, all guiding to its summit, and becoming steeper and narrower as they ascend; these in their turn being divided by similar, but smaller ravines—caused in the

§ 12. And the effect of the action of torrents.

same manner—into the same kind of ridges; and these again by another series, the arrangement being carried finer and farther according to the softness of the rock. The south side of Glaramara, in Cumberland, is a characteristic example; and the Montagne du Coté, in Chamonix, a noble instance of one of these ridges or buttresses, with all its sub-divisions, on a colossal scale.

§ 13. The exceeding simplicity of contour caused by these influences.

Now we wish to draw especial attention to the broad and bold simplicity of mass, and the excessive complication of details, which influences like these, acting on an enormous scale, must inevitably produce in all mountain groups; because each individual part and promontory, being compelled to assume the same symmetrical curves as its neighbours, and to descend at precisely the same slope to the valley, falls in with their prevailing lines, and becomes a part of a great and harmonious whole, instead of an unconnected and discordant individual. It is true that each of these members has its own touches of specific character, its own projecting crags and peculiar hollows, but by far the greater portion of its lines will be such as unite with, though they do not repeat, those of its neighbours, and carry out the evidence of one great influence and spirit to the limits of the scene. This effort is farther aided by the original unity and connection of the rocks themselves, which, though it often may be violently interrupted, is never without evidence of its existence, for the very interruption itself forces the eye to feel that there is something to be interrupted, a sympathy and similarity of lines and fractures, which, however full of variety and change of direction, never lose the appearance of symmetry of one kind or another. But on the other hand, it is to be remembered that these great sympathizing masses are not one mountain, but a thousand mountains, that they are originally composed of a multitude of separate eminences, hewn and chiselled indeed into associating form, but each retain,

§ 14. And multiplicity of feature.

ing still its marked points and features of character,—that each of these individual members has by the very process which assimilated it to the rest, been divided and subdivided into equally multitudinous groups of minor mountains; finally, that the whole complicated system is interrupted for ever and ever by daring manifestations of the inward mountain will—by the precipice which has submitted to no modulation of the torrent, and the peak which has bowed itself to no terror of the storm. Hence we see that the same imperative laws which require perfect simplicity of mass, require infinite and termless complication of detail,—that there will not be an inch nor a hair's-breadth of the gigantic heap which has not its touch of separate character, its own peculiar curve, stealing out for an instant and then melting into the common line, felt for a moment by the blue mist of the hollow beyond, then lost when it crosses the enlightened slope,—that all this multiplicity will be grouped into larger divisions, each felt by their increasing ærial perspective, and their instants of individual form, these into larger, and these into larger still, until all are merged in the great impression and prevailing energy of the two or three vast dynasties which divide the Kingdom of the scene.

Now there is no vestige nor shadow of approach to such treatment as this in the whole compass of ancient art. Whoever the master, his hills, wherever he has attempted them, have not the slightest trace of association or connection, they are separate, conflicting, confused, petty and paltry heaps of earth; there is no marking of distances or divisions in their body; they may have holes in them, but no valleys,—protuberances and excrescences, but no parts; and in consequence are invariably diminutive and contemptible in their whole appearance and impression.

But look at the mass of mountain on the right in Turner's "Daphne hunting with Leucippus." It is

§ 15. Both utterly neglected in ancient art.

§ 16. The fidelity of treatment in Tur-

ner's "Daphne
and Leucip-
pus."

simple, broad, and united as one surge of a swelling sea ; it rises in an unbroken line along the valley, and lifts its promontories with an equal slope. But it contains in its body ten thousand hills. There is not a quarter of an inch of its surface without its suggestion of increasing distance and individual form. First, on the right, you have a range of tower-like precipices, the clinging wood climbing along their ledges and cresting their summits, white waterfalls gleaming through its leaves, not, as in Claude's scientific ideals, poured in vast torrents over the top, and carefully keeping all the way down on the most projecting parts of the sides, but stealing down, traced from point to point, through shadow after shadow, by their evanescent foam and flashing light,—here a wreath, and there a ray,—through the deep chasms and hollow ravines, out of which rise the soft rounded slopes of mightier mountain, surge beyond surge, immense and numberless, of delicate and gradual curve, accumulating in the sky until their garment of forest is exchanged for the shadowy fold of slumbrous morning cloud, above which the utmost silver peak shines islanded and alone. Put what mountain painting you will beside this, of any other artist, and its heights will look like mole-hills in comparison, because it will not have the unity nor the multiplicity which are in nature, and with Turner, the signs of size.

§ 17. And in the
"Avalanche
and Inunda-
tion."

Again, in the "Avalanche and Inundation," we have for the whole subject nothing but one vast bank of united mountain, and one stretch of uninterrupted valley. Though the bank is broken into promontory beyond promontory, peak above peak, each the abode of a new tempest, the arbiter of a separate desolation, divided from each other by the rushing of the snow, by the motion of the storm, by the thunder of the torrent ; the mighty unison of their dark and lofty line, the brotherhood of ages, is preserved unbroken ; and the broad valley at their feet, though measured league after

league away by a thousand passages of sun and darkness, and marked with fate beyond fate of hamlet and of inhabitant, lies yet but as a straight and narrow channel, a filling furrow before the flood. Whose work will you compare with this? Salvator's grey heaps of earth, seven yards high, covered with bunchy brambles, that we may be under no mistake about the size, thrown about at random in a little plain, beside a zigzagging river, just wide enough to admit of the possibility of there being fish in it, and with banks just broad enough to allow the respectable angler or hermit to sit upon them conveniently in the foreground? Is there more of nature in such paltrinesses, think you, than in the valley and the mountain which bend to each other like the trough of the sea, with the flank of the one swept in one surge into the height of heaven, until the pine forests lie on its immensity like the shadows of narrow clouds, and the hollow of the other laid league by league into the blue of the air, until its white villages flash in the distance only like the fall of a sunbeam.

But let us examine by what management of the details themselves this wholeness and vastness of effect are given. We have just seen (§ 11.) that it is impossible for the slope of a mountain, not actually a precipice of rock, to exceed 35° or 40° , and that by far the greater part of all hill-surface is composed of graceful curves of much less degree than this, reaching 40° only as their ultimate and utmost inclination. It must be farther observed that the interruptions to such curves, by precipices or steps, are always small in proportion to the slopes themselves. Precipices rising vertically more than 100 feet are very rare among the secondary hills of which we are speaking. I am not aware of any cliff in England or Wales where a plumb-line can swing clear for 200 feet; and even although sometimes, with intervals, breaks and steps, we get perhaps 800 feet of a slope of 60° or 70° , yet not only are these

§ 18. The rarity among secondary hills of steep slopes or high precipices.

cases very rare, but even these have little influence on the great contours of a mountain 4000 or 5000 feet in elevation, being commonly balanced by intervals of ascent not exceeding 6° or 8° . The result of which is, first, that the peaks and precipices of a mountain appear as little more than jags or steps emerging from its great curves; and, secondly, that the bases of all hills are enormously extensive as compared with their elevation, so that there must be always a horizontal distance between the observer and the summit, five or six times exceeding the perpendicular one.

§ 19. And consequent expression of horizontal distance in their ascent.

Now it is evident, that whatever the actual angle of elevation of the mountain may be, every exhibition of this horizontal distance between us and the summit, is an addition to its height, and of course to its impressiveness, while every endeavour to exhibit its slope as steep and sudden, is diminution at once of its distance and elevation. In consequence nature is constantly endeavouring to impress upon us this horizontal distance, which, even in spite of all her means of manifesting it, we are apt to forget or under estimate; and all her noblest effects depend on the full measurement and feeling of it. And it is to the abundant and marvellous expression of it by Turner, that I would direct especial attention, as being that which is in itself demonstrative of the highest knowledge and power—knowledge, in the constant use of lines of subdued slope in preference to steep or violent ascents, and in the perfect subjection of all such features, when they necessarily occur, to the larger masses; and power, in the inimitable statements of retiring space by mere painting of surface details, without the aid of crossing shadows, divided forms, or any other artifice.

§ 20. Full statement of all these facts in various works of Turner.—“Caudebec,” &c.

The “Caudebec” in the Rivers of France, is a fine instance of almost every fact which we have been pointing out. We have in it, first, the clear expression of what takes place constantly among hills,—that the river,

as it passes through the valley, will fall backwards and forwards from side to side, lying first, if I may so speak, with all its weight against the hills on the one side, and then against those on the other, so that, as here it is exquisitely told, in each of its circular sweeps the whole force of its current is brought deep and close to the bases of the hills, while the water on the side next the plain is shallow, deepening gradually. In consequence of this, the hills are cut away at their bases by the current, so that their slopes are interrupted by precipices mouldering to the water. Observe first, how nobly Turner has given us the perfect unity of the whole mass of hill, making us understand that every ravine in it has been cut gradually by streams. The first eminence, beyond the city, is not disjointed from, or independent of, the one succeeding, but evidently part of the same whole, originally united, separated only by the action of the stream between. The association of the second and third is still more clearly told, for we see that there has been a little longitudinal valley running along the brow of their former united mass, which after the ravine had been cut between, formed the two jags which Turner has given us at the same point in each of their curves. This great triple group has, however, been originally distinct from those beyond it, for we see that these latter are only the termination of the enormous even slope which appears again on the extreme right, having been interrupted by the rise of the near hills. Observe how the descent of the whole series is kept gentle and subdued, never suffered to become steep except where it has been cut away by the river, the sudden precipice caused by which is exquisitely marked in the last two promontories, where they are defined against the bright horizon; and finally observe how, in the ascent of the nearest eminence beyond the city, without one cast shadow or any division of distances, every yard of surface is

felt to be retiring by the mere painting of its details,—how we are permitted to walk up it, and along its top, and are carried, before we are half way up, a league or two forward into the picture. The difficulty of doing this, however, can scarcely be appreciated except by an artist.

§ 21. The use of considering geological truths.

I do not mean to assert that this great painter is acquainted with the geological laws and facts he has thus illustrated; I am not aware whether he be or not; I merely wish to demonstrate, in points admitting of demonstration, that intense observation of, and strict adherence to truth, which it is impossible to demonstrate in its less tangible and more delicate manifestations. However I may *feel* the truth of every touch and line, I cannot *prove* truth, except in large and general features, and I leave it to the arbitration of every man's reason, whether it be not likely that the painter who is thus so rigidly faithful in great things that every one of his pictures might be the illustration of a lecture on the physical sciences, is not likely to be faithful also in small.

§ 22. Expression of retiring surface by Turner, contrasted with the work of Claude.

“Honfleur,” and the scene between Clairmont and Mauves, supply us with farther instances of the same grand simplicity of treatment, and the latter is especially remarkable for its expression of the furrowing of the hills by descending water, in the complete roundness and symmetry of their curves, and in the delicate and sharp shadows which are cast in the undulating ravines. It is interesting to compare with either of these noble works such hills as those of Claude, on the left of the picture marked 260 in the Dulwich Gallery. We have here a mass of mountain intended to retire from us, but the clumsy workman not being able to indicate this retirement upon their surfaces, is compelled to have recourse to the usual tyro's expedient of drawing edge behind edge, like the scenes of a theatre; and these same unlucky edges only multiply

the exhibition of his weakness, for, having evidently no power of indicating roundness or solidity in any of them, he has trusted entirely, like an awkward school-boy, to making the outline hard and bright, and shading the body of each gradually as it comes down, which is so far from accomplishing his purpose, that it has made the edges, if anything, rather nearer than any other part of the hills, and instead of promontories, we have pasteboard scenes. There is no detail nor surface in one of them ; not an inch of ground for us to stand upon ; we must either sit astride upon the edge, or fall to the bottom. Now there is no doubt nor capability of dispute about such painting as this ; it is the work of a mere tyro, and a weak and childish tyro, ignorant of the common laws of light and shadow ; it is what beginners always do, and always have done, but what, if they have either sense or feeling, they soon cease to do. I could not point to a more complete instance of mountain calumny ; nor can I oppose it more completely, in every circumstance, than with the "Honfleur" of Turner, already mentioned, in which there is not one edge nor division admitted, and yet we are permitted to climb up the hill from the town, and pass far into the mist along its top, and so descend mile after mile along the ridge to seaward, until, without one break in the magnificent unity of progress, we are carried down to the utmost horizon. And contrast the brown paint of Claude, which you can only guess to be meant for rock or soil because it *is* brown, with Turner's profuse, pauseless richness of feature, carried through all the enormous space—the unmeasured wealth of exquisite detail, over which the mind can dwell, and walk, and wander, and feast for ever, without finding either one break in its vast simplicity, or one vacuity in its exhaustless splendour.

But these, and hundreds of others which it is sin not § 23. The same
to dwell upon—wooded hills and undulating moors of moderation of
slope in the

contours of his
higher hills.

North England—rolling surges of park and forest of the South—soft and vine-clad ranges of French coteaux, casting their oblique shadows on silver leagues of glancing rivers,—and olive-whitened promontories of Alp and Apennine, are only instances of Turner's management of the lower and softer hills. In the bolder examples of his powers, where he is dealing with lifted masses of enormous mountain, we shall still find him as cautious in his use of violent slopes or vertical lines, and still as studied in his expression of retiring surface. We never get to the top of one of his hills without being tired with our walk; not by the steepness, observe, but by the stretch; for we are carried up towards the heaven by such delicate gradation of line, that we scarcely feel that we have left the earth before we find ourselves among the clouds. The "Skiddaw," in the illustrations to Scott, is a noble instance of this majestic moderation. The mountain lies in the morning light, like a level vapour; its gentle lines of ascent are scarcely felt by the eye; it rises without effort or exertion, by the mightiness of its mass; every slope is full of slumber; and we know not how it has been exalted, until we find it laid as a floor for the walking of the eastern clouds. So again in the "Fort Augustus," where the whole elevation of the hills depends on the soft lines of swelling surface which undulate back through leagues of mist, carrying us unawares higher and higher above the diminished lake, until, when we are all but exhausted with the endless distance, the mountains make their last spring, and bear us, in that instant of exertion, half way to heaven.

§ 24. The peculiar difficulty of investigating the more essential truths of hill outline.

I ought perhaps rather to have selected, as instances of mountain form, such elaborate works as the "Oberwesel" or "Lake of Uri," but I have before expressed my dislike of speaking of such magnificent pictures as these by parts. And indeed all proper consideration of the hill drawing of Turner must be deferred until we

are capable of testing it by the principles of beauty ; for, after all, the most essential qualities of line,—those on which all right delineation of mountain character must depend, are those which are only to be explained or illustrated by appeals to our feeling of what is beautiful. There is an expression and a feeling about all the hill lines of nature, which I think I shall be able, hereafter, to explain ; but it is not to be reduced to line and rule—not to be measured by angles or described by compasses—not to be chipped out by the geologist, or equated by the mathematician. It is intangible, incalculable—a thing to be felt, not understood—to be loved, not comprehended—a music of the eyes, a melody of the heart, whose truth is known only by its sweetness. It will only be when we can feel as well as think, and rejoice as well as reason, that I shall be able to lead you with Turner to his favourite haunts—to bid you walk with him along the sunny slopes of the waving hills, with their rich woods bending on their undulations like the plumage on a bird's bosom—and up the hollow paths of silent valleys, and along the rugged flanks of heaving mountains, passing like a cloud from crag to crag, and chasm to chasm, and solitude to solitude, among lifted walls of living rock, mighty surges of tempestuous earth, dim domes of heaven-girded snow, where the morning first strikes, and the sunset last lingers, and the stars pause in their setting, and the tempest and the lightning have their habitation,—to bid you behold in all that perfect beauty which is known only to love—that truth infinite and divine, which is revealed only to devotion.

I can scarcely, without repeating myself to tedious-
ness, enter at present into proper consideration of the
mountain drawing of other modern painters. We have,
fortunately, several by whom the noble truths which we
have seen so fully exemplified by Turner are also deeply
felt and faithfully rendered, though there is a necessity,

§ 25. Works of
other modern
artists.—
Clarkson
Stanfield.

for the perfect statement of them, of such an unison of freedom of thought with perfect mastery over the greatest mechanical difficulties, as we can scarcely hope to see attained by more than one man in our age. Very nearly the same words which we used in reference to Stanfield's drawings of the central clouds, might be applied to his rendering of mountain truth. He occupies exactly the same position with respect to other artists in earth as in cloud. None can be said really to *draw* the mountain as he will, to have so perfect a mastery over its organic development; but there is, nevertheless, in all his works, some want of feeling and individuality. He has studied and mastered his subject to the bottom, but he trusts too much to that past study, and rather invents his hills from his possessed stores of knowledge, than expresses in them the fresh ideas received from nature. Hence, in all that he does, we feel a little too much that the hills are his own. We cannot swear to their being the particular crags and individual promontories which break the cone of Ischia, or shadow the waves of Maggiore. We are nearly sure, on the contrary, that nothing but the outline is local, and that all the filling up has been done in the study. Now, we have already shown, (Sect. I. Chap. III.) that particular truths are more important than general ones, and this is just one of the cases in which that rule especially applies. Nothing is so great a sign of truth and beauty in mountain drawing as the appearance of individuality—nothing is so great a proof of real imagination and invention, as the appearance that nothing has been imagined or invented. We ought to feel of every inch of mountain, that it *must* have existence in reality, that if we had lived near the place we should have known every crag of it, and that there must be people to whom every crevice and shadow of the picture is fraught with recollections, and coloured with associations. The moment the artist can

§ 26. Importance of particular and individual truth in hill drawing.

make us feel this—the moment he can make us think that *he* has done nothing, that nature has done all—that moment he becomes ennobled, he proves himself great. As long as we remember him, we cannot respect him. We honour him most when we most forget him. He becomes great when he becomes invisible. And we may, perhaps, be permitted to express our hope that Mr. Stanfield will—our conviction that he must—if he would advance in his rank as an artist, attend more to local character, and give us generally less of the Stanfield limestone. He ought to study with greater attention the rocks which afford finer divisions and more delicate parts (slates and gneiss); and he ought to observe more fondly and faithfully those beautiful laws and lines of swell and curvature, by intervals of which nature sets off and relieves the energy of her peaked outlines. He is at present apt to be too rugged, and, in consequence, to lose size. Of his best manner of drawing hills, I believe I can scarcely give a better example than the “Rocks of Suli,” engraved in Finden’s illustrations to Byron. It is very grand and perfect in all parts and points.

Copley Fielding is our next greatest artist in the drawing of the inferior mountains. His mountain *feeling* is quite perfect; nothing can be more delicate than his perception of what is graceful in the outline, or of what is valuable in the tenderness of aerial tone. But again, as with his clouds, so with his hills; it is all feeling, and no drawing. As long as he keeps to silvery films of misty outline, or purple shadows mingled with the evening light, he is true and beautiful; but the moment he withdraws the mass out of its veiling mystery, he is lost. His worst drawings, therefore, are those on which he has spent most time; for he is sure to show weakness wherever he gives detail. We believe that all his errors proceed, as we observed before, from his not

§ 27. Works of Copley Fielding. His high feeling.

working with the chalk or pencil; and that if he would paint half the number of pictures in the year which he usually produces, and spend his spare time in hard dry study of forms, the half he painted would be soon worth double the present value of all. For he really has deep and genuine feeling of hill character—a far higher perception of space, elevation, incorporeal colour, and all those qualities which are the poetry of mountains, than any other of our water-colour painters; and it is an infinite pity that he should not give to these delicate feelings the power of realization, which might be attained by a little labour. A few thorough studies of his favourite mountains, Ben-Venue or Ben-Cruachan, in clear, strong, front chiaroscuro, allowing himself neither colour nor mist, nor any means of getting over the ground but downright drawing, would, we think, open his eyes to sources of beauty of which he now takes no cognizance. He ought not, however, to repeat the same subjects so frequently, as the casting about of the mind for means of varying them blunts the feelings to truth. And he should remember that an artist, who is not making progress, is nearly certain to be retrograding; and that progress is not to be made by working in the study, or by mere labour bestowed on the repetition of unchanging conceptions.

§ 28. Works of
J. D. Harding
and others.

J. D. Harding would paint mountains very nobly, if he made them of more importance in his compositions, but they are usually little more than backgrounds for his foliage or buildings; and it is his present system to make his backgrounds very slight. His colour is very beautiful: indeed, both his and Fielding's are far more refined than Stanfield's. We wish he would oftener take up some wild subject, dependent for interest on its mountain forms alone, as we should anticipate the highest results from his perfect drawing; and we think that such an exercise, occasionally gone com-

pletely through, would counteract a tendency which we perceive in his present distances, to become a little thin and cutting, if not incomplete.

Callcott's work, when he takes up a piece of hill scenery, is very perfect in all but colour. The late G. Robson was a man most thoroughly acquainted with all the characteristics of our own island hills; and some of the outlines of John Varley showed very grand feeling of energy of form.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE FOREGROUND.

§ 1. What
rocks were the
chief compo-
nents of an-
cient landscape
foreground.

WE have now only to observe the close characteristics of the rocks and soils to which the large masses of which we have been speaking, owe their ultimate characters.

We have already seen that there exists a marked distinction between those stratified rocks whose beds are amorphous and without subdivision, as many limestones and sandstones, and those which are infinitely divided by lines of lamination, as all slates. The last kind of rock is the more frequent in nature, and forms the greater part of all hill scenery; it has, however, been successfully grappled with by few, even of the moderns, except Turner, while there is no single example of any aim at it or thought of it among the ancients, whose foregrounds, as far as it is possible to guess at their intention through their concentrated errors, are chosen from among the tufa and travertin of the lower Apennines, (the ugliest as well as the least characteristic rocks of nature,) and whose larger features of rock scenery, if we look at them with a predetermination to find in them a resemblance of *something*, may be pronounced at least liker the mountain limestone than anything else. I shall glance, therefore, at the general characters of these materials first, in order that we may be able to appreciate the fidelity of rock-drawing on which Salvator's reputation has been built.

The massive limestones separate generally into irregular blocks, tending to the form of cubes or parallelepipeds, and terminated by tolerably smooth planes. The weather, acting on the edges of these blocks, rounds them off, but the frost, which while it cannot penetrate nor split the body of the stone, acts energetically on the angles, splits off the rounded fragments, and supplies sharp, fresh, and complicated edges. Hence the angles of such blocks are usually marked by a series of steps and fractures, in which the peculiar character of the rock is most distinctly seen, the effect being increased in many limestones by the interposition of two or three thinner beds between the large strata of which the block has been a part; these thin laminæ breaking easily, and supplying a number of fissures and lines at the edge of the detached mass. Thus, as a general principle, if a rock have character anywhere, it will be on the angle, and however even and smooth its great planes may be, it will usually break into variety where it turns a corner. In one of the most exquisite pieces of rock truth ever put on canvass, the fore ground of the "Napoleon" in last year's Academy, this principle was beautifully exemplified in the complicated fractures of the upper angle just where it turned from the light, while the planes of the rock were varied only by the modulation they owed to the waves. It follows from this structure that the edges of all rock being partially truncated, first by large fractures, and then by the rounding of the fine edges of these by the weather, perpetually present *convex* transitions from the light to the dark side, the planes of the rock almost always swelling a little *from* the angle.

Now it will be found throughout the works of Salvator, that his most usual practice was to give a *concave* sweep of the brush for his first expression of the dark side, leaving the paint darkest towards the light, by which daring and original method of procedure he has

§ 2. Salvator's limestones. The real characters of the rock. Its fractures, and obtuseness of angles.

§ 3. Salvator's acute angles caused by the meeting of concave curves.

succeeded in covering his foregrounds with forms which approximate to those of drapery, of ribands, of crushed cocked hats, of locks of hair, of waves, leaves, or anything, in short, flexible or tough; but which of course are not only unlike, but directly contrary to the forms which nature has impressed on rocks.

§ 4. The true outlines are all angular.

Again, the grand outlines of rocks are all angular. Water-worn and rounded they may be, or modulated on the surface as we shall presently see, but their prevailing lines and shadows are still rectilinear. In the "Napoleon,"—I can illustrate by no better example, for I can reason as well from this as I could with my foot on the native rock—the great outlines of the foreground are all straight, firm, and decided; its planes nearly level, though touched with tender modulation by the washing of the waves, and the complicated fracture above spoken of, though its edges are entirely rounded off, retains all the character of the right lines of which it was originally composed.

§ 5. Salvator's are all curved.

But I think it would be difficult to show any strokes of the brush on any rocks painted by the old masters, by Salvator especially, not curvilinear. And the circular and sweeping strokes or stains which are dashed at random over their surfaces, only fail of destroying all resemblance whatever to rock structure from their frequent want of any meaning at all, and from the impossibility of our supposing any of them to be representative of shade. Now, if there be any part of landscape in which nature develops her principles of light and shade more clearly than another, it is rock; for the dark sides of fractured stone receive brilliant reflexes from the lighted surfaces, on which the shadows are marked with the most exquisite precision, especially because, owing to the parallelism of cleavage, the surfaces lie usually in directions nearly parallel. Hence every crack and fissure has its shadow and reflected light separated with the most delicious distinctness, and the organization and solid form of all parts are told

§ 6. Peculiar distinctness of light and shade in the rocks of nature.

with a decision of language, which, to be followed with anything like fidelity, requires the most transparent colour, and the most delicate and scientific drawing. So far are the works of the old landscape-painters from rendering this, that it is exceedingly rare to find a single passage in which the shadow can even be distinguished from the dark side, they scarcely seem to know the one to be darker than the other; and the strokes of the brush are not used to explain or express a form known or conceived, but are dashed and daubed about without any aim beyond the covering of the canvass. "A rock," the old masters appear to say to themselves, "is a great irregular, formless, characterless, lump; but it must have shade upon it, and any grey marks will do for that shade."

Finally, while few, if any, of the rocks of nature are untraversed by delicate and slender fissures, whose black sharp lines are the only means by which the peculiar quality in which rocks most differ from the other objects of the landscape, brittleness, can be effectually suggested, we look in vain among the blots and stains with which the rocks of ancient art are loaded, for any vestige or appearance of fissure or splintering. Toughness and malleability appear to be the qualities whose expression is most aimed at; sometimes sponginess, softness, flexibility, tenuity, and occasionally transparency. Take for instance the foreground of Salvator, in No. 220 of the Dulwich Gallery. There is, on the right-hand side of it, an object, which I never walk through the room without contemplating for a minute or two with renewed solicitude and anxiety of mind, indulging in a series of very wild and imaginative conjectures as to its probable or possible meaning. I think there is reason to suppose that the artist intended it either for a very large stone, or for the trunk of a tree; but any decision as to its being either one or the other of these must, I conceive, be the extreme of

§ 7. Peculiar confusion of both in the rocks of Salvator.

§ 8. And total want of any expression of hardness or brittleness.

§ 9. Instances in particular pictures.

rashness. It melts into the ground on one side, and might reasonably be conjectured to form a part of it, having no trace of woody structure or colour; but on the other side it presents a series of concave curves, interrupted by cogs like those of a water-wheel, which the boldest theorist would certainly not feel himself warranted in supposing symbolical of rock. I should be glad of other opinions upon the subject; but, on the whole, I believe that more is to be said against it botanically than geologically, and that the hypothesis most favourable to Salvator would furnish us, in this piece of drawing, with one of the finest examples existing of concentrated geological falsehood. The forms which this substance, whatever it be, assumes, will be found repeated, though in a less degree, in the foreground of No. 159, where they are evidently meant for rock; not to speak of the blocks on the other side of the river in the same picture, whose shapeless, daubed, shadowless concavities are to the full as offensive and absurd, though not quite so ambiguous.

§10. Compared
with the work
of Stanfield.

Let us contrast with this system of rock-drawing, the faithful, scientific and dexterous studies of nature which we find in the works of Clarkson Stanfield. He is a man especially to be opposed to the old masters, because he usually confines himself to the same rock subjects as they—the mouldering and furrowed crags of the secondary formation which arrange themselves more or less into broad and simple masses; and in the rendering of these it is impossible to go beyond him. Nothing can surpass his care, his firmness, or his success, in marking the distinct and sharp light and shade by which the form is explained, never confusing it with local colour, however richly his surface-texture may be given; while the wonderful play of line with which he will vary, and through which he will indicate, the regularity of stratification, is almost as instructive as that of nature herself. I cannot point to any of his

works as better or more characteristic than others, for he is a man who never fails, and who is constantly presenting us with some highly-wrought example of rock truth; but his "Ischia," in the present British Institution, may be taken as a fair average example. The "Botallack Mine, Cornwall," engraved in the Coast Scenery, gives us a very finished and generic representation of rock, whose primal organization has been violently affected by external influences. We have the stratification and cleavage indicated at its base, every fissure being sharp, angular, and decisive, disguised gradually as it rises by the rounding of the surface, and the successive furrows caused by the descent of streams. But the exquisite drawing of the foreground is especially worthy of notice. No huge concave sweeps of the brush, no daubing or splashing here. Every inch of it is brittle and splintery, and the fissures are explained to the eye by the most perfect, speaking light and shade,—we can stumble over the edges of them. The "East Cliff, Hastings," is another very fine example, from the exquisite irregularity with which its squareness of general structure is varied and disguised. Observe how totally contrary every one of its lines is to the absurdities of Salvator. Stanfield's are all angular and straight, every apparent curve made up of right lines, while Salvator's are all sweeping and flourishing like so much penmanship. Stanfield's lines pass away into delicate splintery fissures. Salvator's are broad daubs throughout. Not one of Stanfield's lines is like another. Every one of Salvator's mocks all the rest. All Stanfield's curves, where his universal angular character is massed, as on the left-hand side, into large sweeping forms, are convex. Salvator's are every one concave.

The foregrounds of J. D. Harding and rocks of his middle distances are also thoroughly admirable. He is not quite so various and undulating in his line as Stan-

§ 11. Their absolute opposition in every particular.

§ 12. The rocks of J. D. Harding.

field, and sometimes, in his middle distances, is wanting in solidity owing to a little confusion of the dark side and shadow with each other, or with the local colour. But his work, in near passages of fresh-broken, sharp-edged rock, is absolute perfection, excelling Stanfield in the perfect freedom and facility with which his fragments are splintered and scattered; true in every line without the least apparent effort. Stanfield's best works are laborious, but Harding's rocks fall from under his hand as if they had just crashed down the hill-side, flying on the instant into lovely form. In colour also he incomparably surpasses Stanfield, who is apt to verge upon mud, or be cold in his grey. The rich, lichenous, and changeful warmth, and delicate weathered greys of Harding's rock, illustrated as they are by the most fearless, firm, and unerring drawing, render his wild pieces of torrent shore the finest things, next to the work of Turner, in English foreground art.

J. B. Pyne has very accurate knowledge of limestone rock, and expresses it clearly and forcibly, especially in oils, where his decision of execution is very remarkable. And indeed there are few of our landscape painters, who though they may not possess the intimate and scientific geological knowledge of Stanfield and Harding, are not incomparably superior in every quality of drawing to every one of the old masters, though, as it is paying them but a poor compliment to say that they do not contradict nature in every particular, I should rather say, who are not intelligent, truthful, and right in all their work, as far as it goes.

§ 13. Characters of loose earth and soil.

Before passing to Turner, let us take one more glance at the foregrounds of the old masters, with reference, not to their management of rock, which is comparatively a rare component part of their foregrounds, but to the common soil which they were obliged to paint constantly, and whose forms and appearances are the same all over the world. A steep bank of loose earth of any

kind, that has been at all exposed to the weather, contains in it, though it may not be three feet high, features capable of giving high gratification to a careful observer. It is almost a fac-simile of a mountain slope of soft and decomposing rock, it possesses nearly as much variety of character, and is governed by laws of organization no less rigid. It is furrowed in the first place by undulating lines, by the descent of the rain, little ravines, which are cut precisely at the same slope as those of the mountain, and leave ridges scarcely less graceful in their contour, and beautifully sharp in their chiselling.

Where a harder knot of ground or a stone occurs, the earth is washed from beneath it, and accumulates above it, and there we have a little precipice connected by a sweeping curve at its summit with the great slope, and casting a sharp dark shadow; where the soil has been soft, it will probably be washed away underneath until it gives way, and leaves a jagged, hanging, irregular line of fracture; and all these circumstances are explained to the eye in sunshine with the most delicious clearness, every touch of shadow being expressive of some particular truth of structure, and bearing witness to the symmetry into which the whole mass has been reduced. Where this operation has gone on long, and vegetation has assisted in softening the outlines, we have our ground brought into graceful and irregular curves, of infinite variety, but yet always so connected with each other, and guiding to each other, that the eye never feels them as *separate* things, nor feels inclined to count them, nor perceives a likeness in one to the other; they are not repetitions of each other, but are different parts of one system. Each would be imperfect without the one next to it.

Now it is all but impossible to express distinctly the particulars wherein this fine character of curve consists, and to show in definite examples, what it is which makes one representation right, and another wrong. The ground of Teniers, for instance, in No. 139 in the

§ 14. Its exceeding grace and fulness of feature.

§ 15. The ground of Teniers.

Dulwich Gallery, is an example of all that is wrong. It is a representation of the forms of shaken and disturbed soil, such as we should see here and there after an earthquake, or over the ruins of fallen buildings. It has not one contour nor character of the soil of nature, and yet I can scarcely tell you why, except that the curves repeat one another, and are monotonous in their flow, and are unbroken by the delicate angle and momentary pause with which the feeling of nature would have touched them, and are disunited, so that the eye leaps from this to that, and does not pass from one to the other without being able to stop, drawn on by the continuity of line, neither is there any undulation or furrowing of watermark, nor in one spot or atom of the whole surface, is there distinct explanation of form to the eye by means of a determined shadow. All is mere sweeping of the brush over the surface with various ground colours, without a single indication of character by means of real shade.

§ 16. And of
Copley Field-
ing.

Now I may point, in contradistinction to this, to one of Copley Fielding's down or moor foregrounds, and I may tell you that its curves are right and true, and that it is the real ground of nature, such as she produces fresh designs and contours of with every shower; the foreground of his "Bolton Abbey," in last year's Academy, is a good instance; and yet I can scarcely tell you wherein its truth consists, except by repeating the same sentences about continuity and variety of curves, which after all, are things only to be felt and found out for yourself, by diligent study of free nature. No words will explain it, unless you go and lie for a summer or two up to your shoulders in heather, with the purple, elastic ground about you defined against the sky like fantastic mountains. After you have done this, you will feel what truth of ground is, and till then, I cannot in such fine points as these, tell it you; but the facts are not the less certain because they are inexplicable.

The ground of Teniers is anatomically wrong, and that of Fielding right, however little one person may be able to feel that they are so, or another to explain why.

It is an easier matter, however, to point out the fallacy of pieces of ground undisguised by vegetation, such as Both's foreground, in No. 41 of the Dulwich Gallery. § 17. The foreground of Both. If this were meant for rock, it would come under the same category with Salvator's above mentioned, but its violent brown colour seems to mark it for earth; and I believe no eye can help feeling that the series of peaks with hollow curves between them which emerge from the grass in the centre, are such as could not support themselves for ten minutes against an April shower. Concave descending curves can only be obtained in loose soil when there is some knotted and strong protection of roots and leaves at the top, and even then they are generally rough and broken; but whenever earth is exposed, as here, it is reduced either by crumbling in heat, or by being washed down in rain, to convex forms furrowed by little ravines, and always tending as they descend to something like an even slope. Hence nature's ground never by any chance assumes such forms as those of Both, and if—which it would be most difficult to do—a piece of even the toughest clay were artificially reduced to them; with the first noon-day sun, or first summer shower, she would have it all her own way again.

Let not these points be deemed unimportant; the truths of form in common ground are quite as valuable (let me anticipate myself for a moment), quite as beautiful, as any others which nature presents, and in low-land landscape, they present us with a species of line which it is quite impossible to obtain in any other way,—the alternately flowing and broken line of mountain scenery, which, however small its scale, is always of inestimable value, contrasted with the repetitions of organic form which we are compelled to give in vegetation. A § 18. Importance of these minor parts and points.

§ 19. The observance of them is the real distinction between the master and the novice.

really great artist dwells on every inch of exposed soil with care and delight, and renders it one of the most essential, speaking, and pleasurable parts of his composition. And be it remembered, that the man who, in the most conspicuous part of his foreground, will violate truth with every stroke of the pencil, is not likely to be more careful in other parts of it; and that in the little bits which I fix upon for animadversion, I am not pointing out solitary faults, but only the most characteristic examples of the falsehood which is everywhere, and which renders the whole foreground one mass of contradictions and absurdities. Nor do I myself see wherein the great difference lies between a master and a novice, except in the rendering of the finer truths, of which I am at present speaking. To handle the brush freely, and to paint grass and weeds with accuracy enough to satisfy the eye, are accomplishments which a year or two's practice will give any man; but to trace among the grass and weeds those mysteries of invention and combination, by which nature appeals to the intellect—to render the delicate fissure, and descending curve, and undulating shadow of the mouldering soil, with gentle and fine finger, like the touch of the rain itself—to find even in all that appears most trifling or contemptible, fresh evidence of the constant working of the Divine power “for glory and for beauty,” and to teach it and proclaim it to the unthinking and the unregardless—this, as it is the peculiar province and faculty of the master-mind, so it is the peculiar duty which is demanded of it by the Deity.

§ 20. Ground of Cuyp.

It would take me no reasonable nor endurable time, if I were to point out one half of the various kinds and classes of falsehood which the inventive faculties of the old masters succeeded in originating, in the drawing of foregrounds. It is not this man, nor that man, nor one school, nor another; all agree in entire repudiation of everything resembling facts, and in the high degree of

absurdity of what they substitute for them. Even Cuyp, who evidently saw and studied *near* nature, as an artist should do—not fishing for idealities, but taking what nature gave him, and thanking her for it—even he appears to have supposed that the drawing of the earth might be trusted to chance or imagination, and, in consequence, strews his banks with lumps of dough, instead of stones. Perhaps, however, the “beautiful foregrounds” of Claude afford the most remarkable instances of childishness and incompetence of all. That of his morning landscape, with the large group of trees and high single-arched bridge, in the National Gallery, is a pretty fair example of the kind of error which he constantly falls into. I will not say anything of the agreeable composition of the three banks, rising one behind another from the water. I merely affirm that it amounts to a demonstration that all three were painted in the artist’s study, without any reference to nature whatever. In fact, there is quite enough intrinsic evidence in each of them to prove this, seeing that what appears to be meant for vegetation upon them, amounts to nothing more than a green stain on their surfaces, the more evidently false because the leaves of the trees twenty yards farther off are all perfectly visible and distinct; and that the sharp lines with which each cuts against that beyond it, are not only such as crumbling earth could never show or assume, but are maintained through their whole progress ungraduated, unchanging, and unaffected by any of the circumstances of varying shade to which every one of nature’s lines is inevitably subjected. In fact, the whole arrangement is precisely, in foreground, what we before saw in Claude’s hills,—the impotent struggle of a tyro to express, by successive edges, that approach of earth which he finds himself incapable of expressing by the drawing of the surface. Claude wished to make you understand that the edge of his pond came nearer and nearer: he had probably

§ 21. And of Claude.

§ 22. The entire weakness and childishness of the latter.

often tried to do this with an unbroken bank, or a bank only varied by the delicate and harmonized anatomy of nature, and he had found that owing to his total ignorance of the laws of perspective, such efforts on his part invariably ended in his reducing his pond to the form of a round O, and making it look perpendicular. Much comfort and solace of mind, in such unpleasant circumstances, may be derived from instantly dividing the obnoxious bank into a number of successive promontories, and developing their edges with completeness and intensity. Every school-girl's drawing, as soon as her mind has arrived at so great a degree of enlightenment as to perceive that perpendicular water is objectionable, will supply us with edifying instances of this unfailing resource; and this foreground of Claude's is only one out of the thousand cases in which he has been reduced to it. And if it be asked, how the proceeding differs from that of nature, I have only to point to nature herself, as she is drawn in the foreground of Turner's "Mercury and Argus," a case precisely similar to Claude's, of earthy crumbling banks cut away by water. It will be found in this picture (and I am now describing nature's work and Turner's with the same words) that the whole distance is given by retirement of solid surface; and that if ever an edge is expressed, it is only felt for an instant, and then lost again, so that the eye cannot stop at it and prepare for a long jump to another like it, but is guided over it, and round it, into the hollow beyond; and thus the whole receding mass of ground, going back for more than a quarter of a mile, is made completely *one*—no part of it is separated from the rest for an instant—it is all united, and its modulations are *members*, not *divisions* of its mass. But those modulations are countless—heaving here, sinking there—now swelling, now mouldering, now blending, now breaking—giving, in fact, to the foreground of this universal master, precisely the same qualities which we

§ 23. Compared
with the work
of Turner.

have before seen in his hills, as Claude gave to his foreground precisely the same qualities which we had before found in *his* hills,—infinite unity, in the one case, finite division in the other.

Let us, then, having now obtained some insight into the principles of the old masters in foreground drawing, contrast them throughout with those of our great modern master. The investigation of the excellence of Turner's drawing becomes shorter and easier as we proceed, because the great distinctions between his work and that of other painters are the same, whatever the object or subject may be, and after once showing the general characters of the particular specific forms under consideration, we have only to point, in the works of Turner, to the same principles of infinity and variety in carrying them out, which we have before insisted upon with reference to other subjects.

§ 24. General features of Turner's foreground.

The "Upper Fall of the Tees," Yorkshire, engraved in the England series, may be given as a standard example of rock drawing to be opposed to the work of Salvator. We have, in the great face of rock which divides the two streams, horizontal lines which indicate the real direction of the strata, and these same lines are given in ascending perspective all along the precipice on the right. But we see also on the central precipice fissures absolutely vertical, which inform us of one series of joints dividing these horizontal strata; and the exceeding smoothness and evenness of the precipice itself informs us that it has been caused by a great separation of substance in the direction of another more important line of joints, running in a direction across the river. Accordingly, we see on the left that the whole summit of the precipice is divided again and again by this great series of joints into vertical beds, which lie against each other with their sides toward us, and are traversed downwards by the same vertical lines traceable on the face of the central cliff. Now, let me

§ 25. Geological structure of his rocks in the "Fall of the Tees."

§ 26. Their
convex surfaces
and fractured
edges.

direct especial attention to the way in which Turner has marked over this general and grand unity of structure—the modifying effects of the weather and the torrent. Observe how the whole surface of the hill above the precipice on the left* is brought into one smooth, unbroken curvature of gentle convexity, until it comes to the edge of the precipice, and then, just on the angle, (compare § 2,) breaks into the multiplicity of fissure which marks its geological structure. Observe how every one of the separate blocks, into which it divides, is rounded and convex in its salient edges turned to the weather, and how every one of their inward angles is marked clear and sharp by the determined shadow and transparent reflex. Observe how exquisitely graceful are all the curves of the convex surfaces, indicating that every one of them has been modelled by the winding and undulating of running water, and how gradually they become steeper as they descend, until they are torn down into the face of the precipice. Finally, observe the exquisite variety of all the touches which express fissure or shade, every one in varying directions and with new forms, and yet throughout indicating that perfect parallelism which at once explained to us the geology of the rock, and falling into one grand mass, treated with the same simplicity of light and shade which a great portrait painter adopts in treating the features of the human face, which, though each has its own separate chiaroscuro, never disturb the wholeness and grandeur of the head, considered as one ball or mass. So here, one deep and marked piece of shadow indicates the greatest proximity of the rounded mass, and from this every shade becomes fainter and fainter, until all are lost in the obscurity and dimness of the hanging precipice and the shattering fall. Again, see how the same fractures just upon the edge take

§ 27. And perfect unity.

* In the light between the waterfall and the large dark mass on the extreme right.

place with the central cliff above the right-hand fall, and how the force of the water is told us by the confusion of debris accumulated in its channel. In fact, the great quality about Turner's drawings which more especially proves their transcendent truth, is the capability they afford us of reasoning on past and future phenomena, just as if we had the actual rocks before us, for this indicates not that one truth is given, nor another, not that a pretty or interesting morsel has been selected here and there, but that the whole truth has been given, with all the relations of its parts, so that we can pick and choose our points of pleasure or of thought for ourselves, and reason upon the whole with the same certainty which we should after having climbed and hammered over the rocks bit by bit.

With this drawing before him, a geologist could give a lecture upon the whole system of aqueous erosion, and speculate as safely upon the past and future states of this very spot, as if he were standing and getting wet with the spray. He would tell you, at once, that the waterfall was in a state of rapid recession, that it had once formed a wide cataract just at the spot where the figure is sitting on the heap of debris, and that when it was there, part of it came down by the channel on the left, its bed being still marked by the delicately chiselled lines of fissure. He would tell you that the foreground had also once been the top of the fall, and that the vertical fissures on the right of it were evidently then the channel of a side stream. He would tell you that the fall was then much lower than it is now, and that being lower, it had less force, and cut itself a narrower bed, and that the spot where it reached the higher precipice is marked by the expansion of the wide basin which its increased violence has excavated, and by the gradually increasing concavity of the rocks below, which we see have been hollowed into a complete vault by the elastic bound of

§ 28. Various parts whose history is told us by the details of the drawing.

the water. But, neither he nor I could tell you with what exquisite and finished marking of every fragment and particle of soil or rock, both in its own structure, and the evidence it bears of these great influences, the whole of this is confirmed and carried out. You must work and watch for this; it is not to be taught by words.

§ 29. Beautiful instance of an exception to general rules in the "Llanthony."

With this inimitable drawing we may compare the rocks in the foreground of the "Llanthony." These latter are not divided by joints, but into thin horizontal and united beds, which the torrent in its times of flood has chiselled away, leaving one exposed under another, with the sweeping marks of its eddies upon their edges. And here we have an instance of an exception to a general rule, occasioned by particular and local action. We have seen that the action of water over any surface *universally*, whether falling, as in rain, or sweeping, as a torrent, induces convexity of form. But when we have rocks *in situ* as here, exposed at their edges to the violent action of an eddy, that eddy will cut a vault or circular space for itself, (as we saw on a large scale with the high waterfall) and we have a concave curve interrupting the general contours of the rock. And thus Turner (while every edge of his masses is rounded, and, the moment we rise above the level of the water, all is convex) has interrupted the great contours of his strata with concave curves, precisely where the last waves of the torrent have swept against the exposed edges of the beds. Nothing could more strikingly prove the depth of that knowledge by which every touch of this consummate artist is regulated, that universal command of subject which never acts for a moment on anything conventional or habitual, but fills every corner and space with new evidence of knowledge, and fresh manifestation of thought.

§ 30. Turner's drawing of detached blocks

The lower fall of the Tees, with the chain-bridge, might serve us for an illustration of all the properties

and forms of vertical beds of rock, as the upper fall has of horizontal; but we pass rather to observe, in detached pieces of foreground, the particular modulation of parts which cannot be investigated in the grand combinations of general mass.

The blocks of stone which form the foreground of the "Ulleswater" are, I believe, the finest example in the world of the finished drawing of rocks which have been subjected to violent aqueous action. Their surfaces seem to palpitate from the fine touch of the waves, and every part of them is rising or falling, in soft swell or gentle depression, though the eye can scarcely trace the fine shadows on which this chiselling of the surface depends. And with all this, every block of them has individual character, dependent on the expression of the angular lines of which its contours were first formed, and which is retained and felt through all the modulation and melting of the water-worn surface. And what is done here in the most important part of the picture, to be especially attractive to the eye, is often done by Turner with lavish and overwhelming power, in the accumulated debris of a wide foreground, strewn with the ruin of ages, as, for instance, in the "Junction of the Greta and Tees," where he has choked the torrent bed with a mass of shattered rock, thrown down with the profusion and carelessness of nature herself; and yet every separate block is a study (and has evidently been drawn from nature), chiselled and varied in its parts, as if it were to be the chief member of a separate subject, yet without ever losing, in a single instance, its subordinate position, or occasioning, throughout the whole accumulated multitude, the repetition of a single line.

I consider cases like these, of perfect finish and new conception, applied and exerted in the drawing of every member of a confused and almost countlessly-divided system, about the most wonderful, as well as the most

§ 31. And of complicated foreground.

characteristic passages of Turner's foregrounds. It is done not less marvellously, though less distinctly, in the individual parts of all his broken ground, as in examples like these of separate blocks. The articulation of such a passage as the nearest bank, in the picture we have already spoken of at so great length, the "Upper Fall of the Tees," might serve us for a day's study, if we were to go into it part by part; but it is impossible to do this, except with the pencil; we can only repeat the same general observations, about eternal change and unbroken unity, and tell you to observe how the eye is kept throughout on solid and retiring surfaces, instead of being thrown, as by Claude, on flat and equal edges. You cannot find a single edge in Turner's work; you are everywhere kept upon round surfaces, and you go back on these you cannot tell how—never taking a leap, but progressing imperceptibly along the unbroken bank, till you find yourself a quarter of a mile into the picture, beside the figure at the bottom of the waterfall.

I may perhaps illustrate the particular qualities of modulation in ground, which are so remarkable in Turner, by a little bit of accidental truth in Claude. In the picture before spoken of, with the three banks, the little piece of ground above the cattle, between the head of the brown cow and the tail of the white one, is well articulated, just where it turns into shade. The difference between this and the hard edges of the banks on the left, can scarcely but be felt.

§ 32. And of loose soil.

Finally, the bank of earth on the right of the grand drawing of "Penmaen Mawr," may be taken as the standard of the representation of soft soil modelled by descending rain, and may serve to show us how exquisite in character are the resultant lines, and how full of every species of attractive and even sublime quality, if we only are wise enough not to scorn the study of them. The higher the mind, it may be taken as an universal rule, the less it will scorn that which appears to be

small or unimportant, and the rank of a painter may always be determined by observing how he uses, and with what respect he views the minutiae of nature. Greatness of mind is not shown by omitting small things, but by making small things great under its influence. He who can take no interest in what is small, will take false interest in what is great; he who cannot make a bank sublime, will make a mountain ridiculous.

It is not until we have made ourselves acquainted with these simple facts of form, as they are illustrated by the slighter works of Turner, that we can become at all competent to enjoy the combination of all, in such works as the "Mercury and Argus," or "Bay of Baïæ," in which the mind is at first bewildered by the abundant outpouring of the master's knowledge. But if we once comprehend the excellence of the drawings, we shall find that these ideal works are little more than glorious combinations of the minor studies, combinations uniting the gathered knowledge and the disciplined thought of years. It is impossible to go into them in writing, the mind itself is lost in the contemplation of their infinity, and how shall words express or follow that which to the eye is inexhaustible? Often as I have paused before these noble works, I never felt on returning to them as if I had ever seen them before, for their abundance is so deep and various that the mind, according to its own temper at the time of seeing, perceives some new series of truths rendered in them, just as it would on revisiting a natural scene, and detects new relations and associations of these truths which set the whole picture in a different light at every return to it. And this effect is especially caused by the management of the foreground; for the more marked objects of the picture may be taken one by one, and thus examined and known, but the foregrounds of Turner are so united in all their parts that the eye cannot take them by

§ 33. The union of all in the ideal foregrounds of the Academy pictures.

§ 34. And the
great lesson to
be received
from all.

divisions, but is guided from stone to stone, and bank to bank, discovering truths totally different in aspect, according to the direction in which it approaches them, and approaching them in a different direction, and viewing them as part of a new system, every time that it begins its course at a new point. One lesson, however, we are invariably taught by all, however approached or viewed,—that the work of the Great Spirit of nature is as deep and unapproachable in the lowest as in the noblest objects,—that the Divine mind is as visible in its full energy of operation on every lowly bank and mouldering stone, as in the lifting of the pillars of heaven, and settling the foundation of the earth; and that to the rightly perceiving mind, there is the same infinity, the same majesty, the same power, the same unity, and the same perfection, manifest in the casting of the clay as in the scattering of the cloud, in the mouldering of the dust as in the kindling of the day-star.

SECTION V.

OF TRUTH OF WATER.

CHAPTER I.

OF WATER, AS PAINTED BY THE ANCIENTS.

OF all inorganic substances, acting in their own proper nature, and without assistance or combination, water is the most wonderful. If we think of it as the source of all the changefulness and beauty which we have seen in clouds; then as the instrument by which the earth we have contemplated was modelled into symmetry, and its crags chiselled into grace; then as, in the form of snow, it robes the mountains it has made with that transcendent light which we could not have conceived if we had not seen; then as it exists in the foam of the torrent—in the iris which spans it, in the morning mist which rises from it, in the deep crystalline pools which mirror its hanging shore, in the broad lake and glancing river; finally, in that which is to all human minds the best emblem of unwearied, unconquerable power, the wild, various, fantastic, tameless unity of the sea; what shall we compare to this mighty, this universal element, for glory and for beauty? or how shall we follow its eternal changefulness of feeling? It is like trying to paint a soul.

§ 1. Sketch of the functions and infinite agency of water.

§ 2. The ease with which a common representation of it may be given. The impossibility of a faithful one.

To reach the ordinary appearance of calm water—to lay on canvass as much evidence of surface and reflection as may make us understand that water is meant—is, perhaps, the easiest task of art; and even ordinary running or falling water may be sufficiently rendered, by observing careful curves of projection with a dark ground, and breaking a little white over it, as we see done with judgment and truth by Ruysdael. But to give the forms and fury of water when it begins to show itself—to give the flashing and rocket-like velocity of a noble cataract, or the precision and grace of the sea wave, so exquisitely modelled, though so mockingly transient—so mountainous in its form, yet so cloud-like in its motion—with its variety and delicacy of colour, when every ripple and wreath has some peculiar passage of reflection upon itself alone, and the radiating and scintillating sunbeams are mixed with the dim hues of transparent depth and dark rock below;—to do this perfectly, is beyond the power of man; to do it even partially, has been granted to but one or two, even of those few who have dared to attempt it.

§ 3. Difficulty of properly dividing the subject.

As the general laws which govern the appearances of water have equal effect on all its forms, it would be injudicious to treat the subject in divisions; for the same forces which govern the waves and foam of the torrent, are equally influential on those of the sea; and it will be more convenient to glance generally at the system of water-painting of each school and artist, than to devote separate chapters to the examination of the lake, river, or sea-painting of all. We shall, therefore, vary our usual plan, and look first at the water-painting of the ancients; then at that of the moderns generally; lastly, at that of Turner.

§ 4. General rules which regulate the phenomena of water. First, its universality of reflection.

We must first state a few of the constant and most important laws which regulate the appearance of water under all circumstances. They are not dependent merely on experience or observation, but are all demon-

strable from the mechanical properties of water and light.

I. Nothing can hinder water from being a reflecting medium, but dry dust or filth of some kind on its surface. Dirty water, if the foul matter be dissolved or suspended in the liquid, reflects just as clearly and sharply as pure water, only the image is coloured by the hue of the mixed matter, and becomes comparatively brown or dark.

II. If water be rippled, the side of every ripple next to us reflects a piece of the sky, and the side of every ripple farthest from us reflects a piece of the opposite shore, if it be near, or of whatever objects may be beyond the ripple. But as we soon lose sight of the farther sides of the ripples on the retiring surface, the whole rippled space will then be reflective of the sky only. Thus, in a lake where calm distant water receives reflections of high shores, every extent of rippled surface will appear as a bright line interrupting that reflection with the colour of the sky.

§ 5. How modified by ripple.

III. When a ripple or swell is seen at such an angle as to afford a view of its farther side, it carries the reflection of objects beyond it farther down than calm water would. Therefore all ripple or motion in water elongates reflections, and throws them into confused vertical lines.

§ 6. How prolonged and broken.

IV. Rippled water, of which we can see the farther side of the waves, will reflect a perpendicular line clearly, a bit of its length being given on the side of each wave, and easily joined by the eye. But if the line slope, its reflection will be excessively confused and disjointed; and if horizontal, nearly invisible.

V. Every reflection is the image in reverse of just so much of the objects beside the water, as we could see if we were placed as much under the level of the water as we are actually above it. We cannot see the reflection of the top of a flat stone, because we could not see the

§ 7. How changed in relation of parts.

real top of the stone if we were under the level of the water; and if an object be so far back from the bank, that if we were five feet under the water level we could not see it over the bank, then, standing five feet above the water, we shall not be able to see its image under the reflected bank.

§ 8. Not affected by distance.

VI. But if the object subtend the proper angle for reflection, it does not matter how great its distance may be. The image of a mountain fifty miles off is as clear, in proportion to the clearness of the mountain itself, as the image of a stone on the beach, in proportion to the clearness of the stone itself.

§ 9. Water receives no shadow.

VII. There is no shadow on clean water. Every darkness on it is reflection, not shadow. If it have rich colouring matter suspended on it, or a dusty surface, it will take a feeble shadow, and where there is even very faint and variable positive colour, as in the sea, it will take something like shadows in distant effect, but never near. Those parts of the sea which appear bright in sunshine, as opposed to other parts, are composed of waves of which every one conveys to the eye a little image of the sun, but which are not themselves illumined in doing so, for the light on the wave depends on your position, and moves as you move; it cannot therefore be positive light on the object, for you will not get the light to move off the trunk of a tree because you move away from it. The horizontal lines, therefore, cast by clouds on the sea, are not shadows but reflections. Optical effects of great complication take place by means of refraction and mirage, but it may be taken for granted that if ever there is a real shadow, it is cast on mist, and not on water. And on clear water, near the eye, there never can be even the appearance of a shadow, except a delicate tint on the foam.

§ 10. Works of Canaletti. His management of ripple equally false in near water,

These rules are universal and incontrovertible. Let us test by them some of the simplest effects of ancient art. Among all the pictures of Canaletti which I

have ever seen, and they are not few, I remember but one or two where there is any variation from one method of treatment of the water. He almost always covers the whole space of it with one monotonous ripple, composed of a coat of well chosen, but perfectly opaque and smooth sea-green, covered with a certain number, I cannot state the exact average, but it varies from three hundred and fifty to four hundred and upwards, according to the extent of canvass to be covered, of white concave touches, which are very properly symbolical of ripple. On the water so prepared, he fixes his gondolas in very good perspective, and thus far, no objection is to be made to the whole arrangement. But a gondola, as every body knows, is a very long shallow boat, little raised above the water except at the extremities, but having a vertical beak, and rowed by two men, or sometimes only one, *standing*. Consequently, wherever the water is rippled, as by Canaletti, we have, by our fourth rule, only a broken and indistinct image of the horizontal and oblique lines of the gondola, but a tolerably clear one of the vertical beak, and the figures, shooting down a long way under or along the water. What does Canaletti give us?—A clear, dark, unbroken reflection of the whole boat, *except* the beak and the figure, which cast none at all. A worthy beginning !

Next, as the canal retires back from the eye, Canaletti very properly and geometrically diminishes the size of his ripples, until he arrives at an even field of apparently smooth water. Now by our second rule, this rippling water as it retires should show more and more of the reflection of the sky above it, and less and less of that of objects beyond it, until at two or three hundred yards down the canal, the whole field of water should be one even grey or blue, the colour of the sky, receiving no reflections whatever of other objects. What does Canaletti do ? Exactly in proportion as he retires,

§ 11. And in distant.

he displays *more and more* of the reflection of objects, and less and less of the sky, until, three hundred yards away, all the houses are reflected as clear and sharp as in a quiet lake. Exemplary Canaletti!

§ 12. He erred not from ignorance, but impotence.

Observe, I do not suppose Canaletti, frequently as he must have been afloat on these canals, to have been ignorant of their every-day appearance. I believe him to be a shameless assertor of whatever was most convenient to him; and the convenience of this his scientific arrangement is indisputable. For in the first place, it is one of the most difficult things in the world to express the light reflection of the blue sky on a distant ripple, and to make the eye understand the cause of the colour, and the motion of the apparently smooth water, especially where there are buildings above to be reflected, for the eye never understands the want of the reflection. But it is the easiest and most agreeable thing in the world to give the inverted image: it occupies a vast space of otherwise troublesome distance in the simplest way possible, and is understood by the eye at once. Hence Canaletti is glad, as any other inferior workman would be, not to say obliged, to give the reflections in the distance. But when he comes up close to the spectator, he finds the smooth surface just as troublesome near, as the ripple would have been far off. It is a very nervous thing for an ignorant artist* to have a great space of vacant smooth water to deal with, close to him, too far down to take reflections from buildings, and yet which must be made to look flat and retiring and transparent. Canaletti, with his sea-green, did not at all feel himself equal to anything of this kind,

* The exquisite accuracy of Canaletti's imitations of chiaroscuro in architecture in no degree prove him an artist. Any mechanic can imitate what is quiet, and finite. It is only where we have motion and infinity, as in water, that the real powers of an artist are tried. We have already seen that Canaletti could not give the essential truths—the infinite, that is to say—even of architecture; and the moment he touches any higher subject, his impotence is made manifest.

and had therefore no resource but in the white touches above described, which occupy the alarming space without any troublesome necessity for knowledge or invention, and supply by their gradual diminution some means of expressing retirement of surface. It is easily understood, therefore, why he should adopt this system, which is just what any awkward workman would naturally cling to, trusting to the inaccuracy of observation of the public, to secure him from detection. And he has not reckoned without his host.

Now, what possibly can be expected from any part of the works of a man who is either thus blind to the broadest facts, perpetually before his eyes, or else who sits down to try how much convenient lying the public can digest. It would be but wasted time to look in him for finer truth, when he thus starts in direct defiance of the most palpable. But if it be remembered that every one of the surfaces of those multitudinous ripples is in nature a mirror which catches, according to its position, either the image of the sky or of the silver beaks of the gondolas, or of their black bodies and scarlet draperies, or of the white marble, or the green sea-weed on the low stones, it cannot but be felt that those waves would have something more of colour upon them than that opaque dead green. Green they are by their own nature, but it is a transparent and emerald hue, mixing itself with the thousand reflected tints without overpowering the weakest of them, and thus, in every one of those individual waves, the truths of colour are contradicted by Canaletti by the thousand, not less fatally, though, of course, less demonstrably, than in the broad cases presented by his general arrangement.

I shall not insult any of the works of modern art by comparing them with this, but I may as well illustrate, from a vignette of Turner, the particular truth in the drawing of rippled water of which we have been speaking. There is a ripple in the "Venice," given among

§ 13. His falseness of colour.

§ 14. Illustration from Turner, of the truth.

the illustrations to Scott's works, on which we see that the large black gondola on the right casts but a faint reflection from its body, while the upward bend of the beak throws a long and decided one. The upright figures on the left cast white light on the water, but the boat in which they are standing has no reflection except at the beak, and there a dark one. The two behind show the same thing.

§ 15. The calms of Vandevelde.

Let us next look at a piece of calm water, by Vandevelde, such as that marked 113 in the Dulwich Gallery. There is not a line of ripple or swell in any part of this sea; it is absolutely windless. Nothing can prevent the sea, when in such a state as this, from receiving reflections, because it is too vast and too frequently agitated to admit of anything like dry dust or scum on its surface, and however foul or thick a Dutch sea may be in itself, no *internal* filth can ever take away the polish and reflective power of the surface. Nor does Vandevelde appear to suppose it can, for the near boat casts its image with great fidelity, which being unprolonged downwards, informs us that the calm is perfect. But what is that underneath the vessel on the right? A grey shade, descending like smoke a little way below the hull, not of the colour of the hull, having no drawing nor detail in any part of it, and breaking off immediately, leaving the masts and sails totally unrecorded in the water. We have here two kinds of falsehood.

§ 16. Their various violations of natural laws.

First, while the ship is nearly as clear as the boats, the reflection of the ship is a mere mist. This is false by Rule VI. Had the ship been misty, its shadow might have been so; not otherwise. Secondly, the reflection of the hull would in nature have been as deep as the hull is high, (or, had there been the slightest swell on the water, deeper,) and the masts and sails would all have been rendered with fidelity, especially their vertical lines. Nothing could by any possibility have prevented their being so, but so much swell on the sea as would

have prolonged the hull indefinitely. Hence both the colour and the form of Vandevælde's reflection are impossible.

Here again, as in the case of Canaletti, I do not suppose Vandevælde to have been ignorant of these common truths; but purposely and wilfully to have denied them because he did not know how to manage, and was afraid of them. He evidently desired to give an impression of great extent of surface between the boat and the ship, and thought that if he gave the reflection the eye would go under the water instead of along it; and that, as the tops of the masts would come down to the nearest part of the surface, they would destroy the evidence of distance, and appear to set the ship *above* the boat instead of *beyond* it. And I doubt not, in such awkward hands, that such would indeed have been the case. I think he estimated his own powers with great accuracy and correctness, but he is not on that account to be excused for casting defiance in the teeth of nature, and painting his surface with grey horizontal lines, as is done by nautically disposed children; for no destruction of distance in the ocean is so serious a loss as that of its liquidity. It is better to feel a want of extent in the sea, than an extent which we might walk upon or play at billiards upon. And though Vandevælde's eye and feelings were too blunt to suffer much pain from his wilful libelling of nature, he ought not to have reckoned so boldly upon general blindness. Unobservant eyes may, indeed, receive almost any degree of error for truth, under particular circumstances; but I cannot believe that any person who has ever floated on calm sea, can stand before this picture, without feeling that the whole of the water below the large ship looks like vapour or smoke. He may not know why, he may not miss the reflection, nor expect it, but he *must* feel that something is wrong, and that the image before him is indeed "a painted ship—upon a painted

§ 17. Also proceeded from impotence, not from ignorance.

§ 18. Their painful effect even on unobservant eyes.

ocean." Perhaps the best way of educating the eye for the detection of the falsehood is to stand before the Mill of Hobbima, No. 131, in which there is a bit of decently painted water, and glance from one picture to the other, when Vandewelde's will soon become by comparison a perfect slate-table, having scarcely even surface or space to recommend it; for, in his ignorance of means to express proximity, the unfortunate Dutchman has been reduced to *blacken* his sea as it comes near, until by the time he reaches the frame it looks perfectly spherical, and is of the colour of ink. What Vandewelde *ought* to have done, and how both the falsehood of his present work, and the destruction of surface which he feared, might have been avoided altogether, I shall show in the third chapter of this section.

§ 19. Singular mistakes of Cuyp, in casting half-a-dozen reflections from one object.

I might thus proceed through half the pieces of water-painting of the old masters which exist, and point out some new violation of truth, some peculiar arrangement of error, in every one; sometimes, indeed, having little influence on the general effect, but always enough to show us that the painter had no real knowledge of his subject, and worked only as an imitator, liable to fall into the most ridiculous mistakes the moment he quitted his model. In the picture of Cuyp, No. 83, Dulwich Gallery, it is exceedingly difficult to understand under what kind of moral or intellectual delusion the painter was induced to give the post at the end of the bank on the left, its *numerous* radiating reflections or shadows; for, in the first place, the sun is not apt to cast half-a-dozen shadows at the same time, neither is water usually disposed to reflect one line in six directions; and, in the second place, supposing that in some melancholy state of bewilderment the painter had supposed these shadows to be indicative of radiating light proceeding from the sun, it is difficult to understand how he could have cast the shadow of the ship in the distance in a line, which, if produced, would

cut half of the shadows of the post at right angles. This is a slight passage, and one not likely to attract attention; but I do not know any thing more perfectly demonstrative of an artist's entire ignorance. I hope, however, and think it probable—for Cuypp *had* looked at nature, and I can scarcely suppose him capable of committing anything so gross as this—that the shadows of the post may be a picture-dealer's improvement, and that only the one cast by the ship is Cuypp's.

Again, in the picture attributed to Paul Potter, No. 176, Dulwich Gallery, I believe most people must feel, the moment they look at it, that there is something wrong with the water, that it looks odd, and hard, and like ice or lead; and though they may not be able to tell the reason of the impression—for when they go near they will find it smooth and lustrous, and prettily painted—yet they will not be able to shake off the unpleasant sense of its being like a plate of bad mirror set in a model landscape among moss, rather than like a pond. The reason is, that while this water receives clear reflections from the fence and hedge on the left, and is every where smooth and evidently capable of giving true images, it yet reflects none of the cows.

§ 20. And of Paul Potter, in casting no reflections from half-a-dozen objects.

We can scarcely expect after finding such errors as these in the painting of ordinary smooth water, to receive much instruction or pleasure from the efforts of the old masters at the more difficult forms and features of water in motion. If, however, all form and feature be abandoned, and falling water be selected at the moment, and under the circumstances when it presents nothing to the eye but a few breaking flakes of foam on the surface of a dark and colourless current, it is then far easier to paint than when it is smooth, and accordingly we find Claude and Poussin succeeding in it well, and throwing a bit of breaking foam over their rocks with good effect; and we find Ruysdael carrying

§ 21. Painting of water in motion. Ruysdael.

the matter farther, and rendering a low waterfall completely, with great fidelity. It is true that he divests his water of colour, and is often wanting in transparency, but still there is nothing radically wrong in his work, and this is saying much. What falling water may be, and ought to be, we shall see in the following chapter.

§ 22. Painting
of rough sea.
Vanderveelde
and Back-
huysen.

I wish Ruysdael had painted one or two rough seas. I believe if he had, he might have saved the unhappy public from much grievous victimizing, both in mind and pocket, for he would have shown that Vanderveelde and Backhuysen were not quite sea-deities. As it is, I believe there is scarcely such another instance to be found in the history of man, of the epidemic aberration of mind into which multitudes fall by infection, as is furnished by the value set upon the works of these men. All others of the ancients have real power of some kind or another, either solemnity of intention, as the Poussins, or refinement of feeling, as Claude, or high imitative accuracy, as Cuyp and Paul Potter, or rapid power of execution, as Salvator; there is something in all which ought to be admired, and of which, if exclusively contemplated, no degree of admiration, however enthusiastic, is unaccountable or unnatural. But Vanderveelde and Backhuysen have *no* power, no redeeming quality of mind; their works are neither reflective, nor eclectic, nor imitative; they have neither tone, nor execution, nor colour, nor composition, nor any artistical merit to recommend them; and they present not even a deceptive, much less a real, resemblance of nature. Had they given us staring green seas with hatchet edges, such as we see "Her Majesty's ships so-and-so" fixed into by the heads or sterns in the outer room of the Academy, the thing would have been comprehensible; there is a natural predilection in the mind of man for green waves with curling tops, but not for clay and wool, and the colour, we should have thought, would have been repulsive even to those least

cognizant of form. Whatever may be the chilliness, or mistiness, or opacity of a Dutch climate and ocean, there is no water, which has motion in it, and air above it, which ever assumes such a grey as is attributed to sea by these painters; cold and lifeless the general effect may be, but at all times it is wrought out by variety of hue in its parts; it is a grey caused by coldness of light, not by absence of colour. And how little the authority of these men is worthy of trust in matters of effect, is sufficiently shown by their constant habit of casting a coal-black shadow half way across the picture on the nearest waves, for, as I have before shown, water itself *never* takes any shadow at all, and the shadow upon foam is so delicate in tint and so broken in form as to be scarcely traceable. The men who could allow themselves to lay a coal-black shadow upon what never takes any shadow at all, and whose feelings were not hurt by the sight of falsehood so distinct, and recoiled not at the shade themselves had made, can be little worthy of credit in anything that they do or assert. Then their foam is either deposited in spherical and tubular concretions, opaque and unbroken, on the surfaces of the waves, or else, the more common case, it is merely the whiteness of the wave shaded gradually off as if it were the light side of a spherical object, of course representing every breaker as crested, not with spray, but with a puff of smoke. Neither let it be supposed that in so doing, they had any intention of representing the vaporous spray taken off wild waves by violent wind. That magnificent effect only takes place on large breakers, and has no appearance of smoke except at a little distance; seen near, it is dust. But the Dutch painters cap every little cutting ripple with smoke, evidently intending it for foam, and evidently thus representing it because they had not sufficient power over the brush to produce the broken effect of real spray. Their seas, in consequence, have neither frangibility nor brilliancy;

§ 23. Their errors of colour and shadow.

§ 24. And powerless efforts at rendering spray.

§ 25. Their impossible insertion of vessels.

§ 26. And impossible curves of surge.

they do not break, but evaporate; their foam neither flies, nor sparkles, nor springs, nor wreaths, nor curdles, nay, it is not even white, nor has the effect of white, but of a dirty efflorescence or exhalation, and their ships are inserted into this singular sea with peculiar want of truth; for in nature, three circumstances contribute to disguise the water line upon the wood;—where a wave is thin, the colour of the wood is shown a little through it—when a wave is smooth, the colour of the wood is a little reflected upon it—and when a wave is broken, its foam more or less obscures and modifies the line of junction; besides which, the wet wood itself catches some of the light and colour of the sea. Instead of this, the waterline of the Dutch vessels is marked clear and hard all round; the water reflecting nothing, showing nothing through it, and equally defined in edge of foam as in all other parts. Finally, the curves of their waves are not curves of *projection*, which all sea lines are, but the undulating lines of ropes, or other tough and connected bodies. Whenever two curves, dissimilar in their nature, meet in the sea, of course they both break, and form an edge; but every kind of curve, catenary or conic, is associated by these painters in most admired disorder, joined indiscriminately by their extremities. This is a point, however, on which it is impossible to argue, without going into high mathematics, and even then, the nature of particular curves, as given by the brush, would be scarcely demonstrable; and I am the less disposed to take much trouble about it, because I think that the persons who are really fond of these works, are almost beyond the reach of argument. I can understand why people like Claude, and perceive much in their sensations which is right and legitimate, and which can be appealed to, and I can give them credit for perceiving more in him than I am at present able to perceive; but when I hear of persons *honestly* admiring Backhuysen or Vandevelde, I think there must be some-

thing physically wrong or wanting in their perceptions. At least, I can form no estimate of what their notions or feelings are, and cannot hope for anything of principle or opinion common between us, which I can address or understand.

The seas of Claude are the finest pieces of water painting in ancient art. I do not say that I like them, because they appear to me selections of the particular moment when the sea is most insipid and characterless; but I think that they are exceedingly true to the forms and time selected, or at least that the fine instances of them are so, of which there are exceedingly few. Anything and everything is fathered upon him, and he probably committed many mistakes himself, and was occasionally right rather by accident than by knowledge.

§ 27. The seas of Claude. Their truthfulness.

Claude and Ruysdael, then, may be considered as the only two men among the old masters, who could paint anything like water in extended spaces or in action. The great mass of the landscape painters, though they sometimes succeeded in the imitation of a pond or a gutter, display, wherever they have space or opportunity to do so, want of feeling in every effort, and want of knowledge in every line.

CHAPTER II.

OF WATER, AS PAINTED BY THE MODERNS.

§ 1. General power of the moderns in painting quiet water. The lakes of Fielding.

THERE are few men among modern landscape painters, who cannot paint quiet water at least respectably and faithfully, if not beautifully. Those who are incapable of doing this, would scarcely be considered artists at all; and any thing like the ripples of Canaletti, or the black shadows of Vandewelde, would be looked upon as most unpromising, even in the work of a novice. Among those who most fully appreciate and render the qualities of space and surface in calm water, perhaps Copley Fielding stands first. His expanses of windless lake are among the most perfect passages of his works; for he can give surface as well as depth, and make his lake look not only clear, but which is far more difficult, lustrous. He is less dependent than most of our artists upon reflections; and can give substance, transparency, and extent, where another painter would be reduced to paper; and he is exquisitely refined in his expression of distant breadth, by the delicate line of ripple interrupting the reflection, and by aerial qualities of colour. Nothing, indeed, can be purer or more refined than his general feeling of lake sentiment, were it not for a want of simplicity—a little too great fondness for pretty, rather than impressive colour, and a consequent want of some of the higher expression of repose. He is a little apt to mistake the affected for the poetical. Some

of his evening passages of sea shore with calm sea, are very perfect; and he is peculiarly daring and successful in the treatment of extensive rippled surface.

Hundreds of men might be named, whose works are highly instructive in the management of calm water. De Wint is singularly powerful and certain, exquisitely bright, and vigorous in colour. The late John Varley produced some noble passages. I have seen, some seven years ago, works by J. Holland, which were, I think, as near perfection as watercolour can be carried—for *bonâ fide* truth, refined and finished to the highest degree. But he has since that time produced worse pictures every year; and his fall appears irrecoverable, unless by a very strong effort and a total change of system. I need scarcely refer to the calm seas of Stanfield and Callcott; of whose excellence it is better to say nothing than little. I only wish that they both, especially the latter, would be a little less cold.

But the power of modern artists is not brought out until they have greater difficulties to struggle with. Stand for half an hour beside the fall of Schaffhausen, on the north side where the rapids are long, and watch how the vault of water first bends, unbroken, in pure, polished velocity, over the arching rocks at the brow of the cataract, covering them with a dome of crystal twenty feet thick—so swift that its motion is unseen except when a foam globe from above darts over it like a falling star; and how the trees are lighted above it under all their leaves, at the instant that it breaks into foam; and how all the hollows of that foam burn with green fire like so much shattering chrysoprase; and how, ever and anon, startling you with its white flash, a jet of spray leaps hissing out of the fall, like a rocket, bursting in the wind and driven away in dust, filling the air with light; and how, through the curdling wreaths of the restless, crashing abyss below, the blue of the water, paled by the foam in its body, shows purer than the

§ 2. The calm rivers of De Wint, J. Holland, &c.

§ 3. The character of bright and violent falling water.

sky through white rain-cloud, while the shuddering iris stoops in tremulous stillness over all, fading and flushing alternately through the choking spray and shattered sunshine, hiding itself at last among the thick golden leaves which toss to and fro in sympathy with the wild water, their dripping masses lifted at intervals, like sheaves of loaded corn, by some stronger gush from the cataract, and bowed again upon the mossy rocks as its roar dies away; the dew gushing from their thick branches through drooping clusters of emerald herbage, and sparkling in white threads along the dark rocks of the shore, feeding the lichens which chase and chequer them with purple and silver. I believe, when you have stood by this for half an hour, you will have discovered that there is something more in nature than has been given by Ruysdael. Probably you will not be much disposed to think of any mortal work at the time; but when you look back to what you have seen, and are inclined to compare it with art, you will remember—or ought to remember—Nesfield. He is a man of extraordinary feeling, both for the colour and the spirituality of a great waterfall; exquisitely delicate in his management of the changeful veil of spray or mist; just in his curves and contours; and unequalled in colour, except by Turner. None of our water-colour painters can approach him in the management of the variable hues of clear water over weeded rocks; but his feeling for it often leads him a little too far, and, like Copley Fielding, he loses sight of simplicity and dignity for the sake of delicacy or prettiness. His water-falls are, however, unequalled in their way; and, if he would remember, that in all such scenes there is much gloom as well as much splendour, and relieve the lustre of his attractive passages of colour with more definite and prevalent greys, and give a little more substance to parts of his picture unaffected by spray, his work would be nearly perfect. His seas are also most in-

§ 4. As given
by Nesfield.

structive; a little confused in chiaroscuro, but refined in form and admirable in colour.

J. D. Harding is, I think, of all men living,* and, therefore certainly, of all who ever have lived, the greatest master in the *drawing* of running water. I do not know what Stanfield would do; I have never seen an important piece of torrent drawn by him; but I believe even he could scarcely contend with the magnificent *abandon* of Harding's brush. There is perhaps nothing which tells more in the drawing of water than decisive and swift execution; for, in a rapid touch the hand naturally falls into the very curve of projection which is the absolute truth, while in slow finish, all precision of curve and character is certain to be lost, except under the hand of an unusually powerful master. But Harding has both knowledge and velocity, and the fall of his torrents is beyond praise; impatient, chafing, substantial, shattering, crystalline, and capricious; full of various form, yet all apparently instantaneous and accidental, nothing conventional, nothing dependent upon parallel lines or radiating curves; all broken up and dashed to pieces over the irregular rock, and yet all in unity of motion. The colour also of his *falling* level parts of his torrents he has taken up a bad grey; which has hurt some of his best pictures. His grey in shadows under rocks or dark reflections is admirable; but it is when the stream is in full light, and unaffected by reflections in distance, that he gets wrong. We believe that the fault is in a want of expression of darkness in the colour, making it appear like a positive hue of the water, for which it is much too dead and cold.

Harding seldom paints sea, and it is well for Stanfield that he does not, or the latter would have to look to his crown. All that we have seen from his hand is, as coast

* Turner is an exception to all rules; and whenever I speak generally, he is to be considered as such.

§ 5. The admirable water drawing of J. D. Harding.

§ 6. His colour; and painting of sea.

sea, quite faultless; we only wish he would paint it more frequently; always however, with a veto upon French fishing boats. In last year's exhibition, he spoiled one of the most superb pieces of sea-shore and sunset which modern art has produced, with the pestilent square sail of one of these clumsy craft, which the eye could not escape from.

§ 7. The sea of Copley Fielding. Its exceeding grace and rapidity.

Before passing to our great sea painter, we must again refer to the works of Copley Fielding. It is with his sea as with his sky, he can only paint one, and that an easy one, but it is for all that, an impressive, and a true one. No man has ever given, with the same flashing freedom, the race of a running tide under a stiff breeze, nor caught with the same grace and precision, the curvature of the breaking wave, arrested or accelerated by the wind. The forward fling of his foam, and the impatient run of his surges, whose quick, redoubling dash we can almost hear, as they break in their haste upon their own bosoms, are nature itself, and his sea-grey or green was, six years ago, very right, as colour; always a little wanting in transparency, but never cold or toneless. Since that time, he seems to have lost the sense of greenness in water, and has verged more and more on the purple and black, with unhappy results. His sea was always dependent for effect on its light or dark relief against the sky, even when it possessed colour; but it now has lost all local colour and transparency together, and is little more than a study of chiaroscuro in an exceedingly ill chosen grey. Besides, the perpetual repetition of the same idea is singularly weakening to the mind. Fielding, in all his life, can only be considered as having produced *one* sea picture. The others are duplicates. He ought to go to some sea of perfect clearness and brilliant colour, as that on the coast of Cornwall or of the gulf of Genoa, and study it sternly in broad daylight, with no black clouds nor drifting rain to help him out of his

difficulties. He would then both learn his strength and add to it.

But there is one point in all his seas deserving especial praise—a marked aim at *character*. He desires, especially in his latter works, not so much to produce an agreeable picture, a scientific piece of arrangement, or delightful melody of colour, as to make us feel the utter desolation, the cold, withering, frozen hopelessness of the continuous storm and merciless sea. And this is peculiarly remarkable in his denying himself all colour, just in the little bits which an artist of inferior mind would paint in sienna and cobalt. If a piece of broken wreck is allowed to rise for an instant through the boiling foam, though the blue stripe of a sailors jacket, or a red rag of a flag would do all our hearts good, we are not allowed to have it; it would make us too comfortable, and prevent us from shivering and shrinking as we look, and the artist, with admirable intention, and most meritorious self-denial, expresses his piece of wreck with a dark, cold brown. Now we think this aim and effort worthy of the very highest praise, and we only wish the lesson were taken up and acted on by our other artists; but Mr. Fielding should remember that nothing of this kind can be done with success unless by the most studied management of the general tones of the picture, for the eye, deprived of all means of enjoying the grey hues, merely as a contrast to bright points, becomes painfully fastidious in the quality of the hues themselves, and demands for its satisfaction such melodies and richness of grey as may in some degree atone to it for the loss of points of stimulus. That grey which would be taken frankly and freely for an expression of gloom, if it came behind a yellow sail or a red cap, is examined with invidious and merciless intentness, when there is nothing to relieve it, and if not able to bear the investigation, if neither agreeable nor variable in its hue, renders the

§ 8. Its high aim at character.

§ 9. But deficiency in the requisite quality of greys.

§ 10. Variety
of the greys of
nature.

picture weak instead of impressive, and unpleasant instead of awful. And indeed the management of nature might teach him this; for though, when using violent contrasts, she frequently makes her gloom somewhat monotonous, the moment she gives up her vivid colour, and depends upon her desolation, that moment she begins to steal the greens into her sea-grey, and the browns and yellows into her cloud-grey, and the expression of variously tinted light through all. Nor is Mr. Fielding without a model in art, for the "Land's End," and "Lowestoffe," and "Snowstorm," (in last year's Academy) of Turner, are nothing more than passages of the most hopeless, desolate, uncontrasted greys, and yet are three of the very finest pieces of colour that have come from his hand. And we sincerely hope that Mr. Fielding will gradually feel the necessity of such studied melodies of quiet colour, and will neither fall back into the old tricks of contrast, nor continue to paint with purple and ink. If he will only make a few careful studies of grey from the mixed atmosphere of spray, rain, and mist of a gale that has been three days hard at work, not of a rainy squall, but of a persevering and powerful storm, and not where the sea is turned into milk and magnesia by a chalk coast, but where it breaks pure and green on grey slate or white granite, as along the cliffs of Cornwall, we think his pictures would present some of the finest examples of high intention and feeling to be found in modern art.

§ 11. Works of
Stanfield. His
perfect know-
ledge and
power.

The works of Stanfield evidently, and at all times, proceed from the hand of a man who has both thorough knowledge of his subject, and thorough acquaintance with all the means and principles of art. We never criticise them, because we feel, the moment we look carefully at the drawing of any single wave, that the knowledge possessed by the master is much greater than our own, and therefore believe that if anything

offends us in any part of the work, it is nearly certain to be our fault, and not the painter's. The local colour of Stanfield's sea is singularly true and powerful, and entirely independent of any tricks of chiaroscuro. He will carry a mighty wave up against the sky, and make its whole body dark and substantial against the distant light, using all the while nothing more than chaste and unexaggerated local colour to gain the relief. His surface is at once lustrous, transparent, and accurate to a hair's-breadth in every curve; and he is entirely independent of dark skies, deep blues, driving spray, or any other means of concealing want of form, or atoning for it. He fears no difficulty, desires no assistance, takes his sea in open daylight, under general sunshine, and paints the *element* in its pure colour and complete forms. But we almost wish that he were less powerful, and more interesting; or that he were a little less Diogenes-like, and did not scorn all that he does not want. Now that he has shown us what he can do without such aids, we wish he would show us what he can do with them. He is, we think, a little wanting in what we have just been praising in Fielding—impressiveness. We should like him to be less clever, and more affecting—less wonderful, and more terrible; and as the very first step towards such an end, to learn, what is now in *his* art the one thing wanting—how to conceal. We are, however, trenching upon matters with which we have at present nothing to do; our concern is now only with truth, and one work of Stanfield alone presents us with as much concentrated knowledge of sea and sky, as, diluted, would have lasted any one of the old masters his life. And let it be especially observed, how extensive and how various is the truth of our modern masters—how it comprises a complete history of that nature of which, from the ancients, you only here and there can catch a stammering descriptive syllable—how Fielding has

§ 12. But want of feeling. General sum of truth presented by modern art.

given us every character of the quiet lake, Robson* of the mountain tarn, De Wint of the lowland river, Nesfield of the radiant cataract, Harding of the roaring torrent, Fielding of the desolate sea, Stanfield of the blue, open, boundless ocean. Arrange all this in your mind, observe the perfect truth of it in all its parts, compare it with the fragmentary falsities of the ancients, and then, come with me to Turner.

* I ought before to have alluded to the works of the late G. Robson. They are a little disagreeable in execution, but there is a feeling of the character of *deep* calm water in them quite unequalled, and different from the works and thoughts of all other men.

CHAPTER III.

OF WATER, AS PAINTED BY TURNER.

I BELIEVE it is a result of the experience of all artists, that it is the easiest thing in the world to give a certain degree of depth and transparency to water ; but that it is next thing to impossible, to give a full impression of surface. If no reflection be given—a ripple being supposed—the water looks like lead : if reflection be given, it in nine cases out of ten looks *morbidly* clear and deep, so that we always go down *into* it, even when the artist most wishes us to glide *over* it. Now, this difficulty arises from the very same circumstance which occasions the frequent failure in effect of the best drawn foregrounds, noticed in Section II., Chapter III. the change, namely, of focus necessary in the eye in order to receive rays of light coming from different distances. Go to the edge of a pond, in a perfectly calm day, at some place where there is duck-weed floating on the surface,—not thick, but a leaf here and there. Now, you may either see in the water the reflection of the sky, or you may see the duckweed ; but you cannot, by any effort, see both together. If you look for the reflection, you will be sensible of a sudden change or effort in the eye, by which it adapts itself to the reception of the rays which have come all the way from the clouds, have struck on the water, and so been sent up again to the eye. The focus you adopt is one fit for great dis-

§ 1. The difficulty of giving surface to smooth water.

§ 2. Is dependent on the structure of the eye, and the focus by which the reflected rays are perceived.

tance; and, accordingly, you will feel that you are looking down a great way under the water, while the leaves of the duckweed, though they lie upon the water at the very spot on which you are gazing so intently, are felt only as a vague, uncertain interruption, causing a little confusion in the image below, but entirely indistinguishable as leaves,—and even their colour unknown and unperceived. Unless you think of them, you will not even feel that anything interrupts your sight, so excessively slight is their effect. If, on the other hand, you make up your mind to look for the leaves of the duckweed, you will perceive an instantaneous change in the effort of the eye, by which it becomes adapted to receive near rays—those which have only come from the surface of the pond. You will then see the delicate leaves of the duckweed with perfect clearness, and in vivid green; but while you do so, you will be able to perceive nothing of the reflections in the very water on which they float—nothing but a vague flashing and melting of light and dark hues, without form or meaning, which, to investigate, or find out what they mean or are, you must quit your hold of the duckweed, and plunge down.

§ 3. Morbid clearness occasioned in painting of water by distinctness of reflections.

Hence it appears, that whenever we see plain reflections of comparatively distant objects, in near water, we cannot possibly see the surface, and vice versa; so that when in a painting we give the reflections, with the same clearness with which they are visible in nature, we pre-suppose the effort of the eye to look under the surface, and, of course, destroy the surface, and make every body inclined to cry out—the moment they come before the picture—“Dear me, what excessively *clear* water!” when, perhaps, in a lowland study, clearness is not a quality which the artist has particularly wished to attain, but which he has found himself forced into, by his reflections, in spite of himself. And the reason of this effect of clearness appearing preter-natural is, that

people are not in the habit of looking at water with the distant focus adapted to the reflections, unless by particular effort. We invariably, under ordinary circumstances, use the surface focus; and in consequence, receive nothing more than a vague and confused impression of the reflected colours and lines, however clearly, calmly, and vigorously all may be defined underneath, if we choose to look for them. We do not look for them, but glide along over the surface, catching only playing light and capricious colour, for evidence of reflection, except where we come to images of objects close to the surface, which the surface focus is of course adapted to receive; and these we see clearly, as of the weeds on the shore, or of sticks rising out of the water, &c. Hence, the right and natural effect of water is only to be rendered by giving the reflections of the *margin* clear and distinct (so clear they usually are in nature, that it is impossible to tell where the water begins); but the moment we touch the reflection of distant objects, as of high trees or clouds, that instant we must become vague and uncertain in drawing, and, though vivid in colour and light, as the object itself, quite indistinct in form and feature. And now we see wherein the peculiar glory of Turner's water-drawing consists; for it is to him only that we can look for the rendering of these high and difficult truths. If we take such a piece of water as that in the foreground of his Chateau of Prince Albert, the first impression from it is,—“What a wide *surface*!” We glide over it a quarter of a mile into the picture before we know where we are, and yet the water is as calm and crystalline as a mirror; but we are not allowed to tumble into it, and gasp for breath as we go down,—we are kept upon the surface, though that surface is flashing and radiant with every hue of cloud, and sun, and sky, and foliage. But the secret is in the drawing of these reflections. We cannot tell when we look at

§ 4. How
avoided by
Turner.

them and *for* them, what they mean. They have all character, and are evidently reflections of something definite and determined; but yet they are all uncertain and inexplicable; playing colour and palpitating shade, which, though we recognise in an instant for images of something, and feel that the water is bright, and lovely, and calm, we cannot penetrate nor interpret: we are not allowed to go down to them, and we repose, as we should in nature, upon the lustre of the level surface. It is in this power of saying everything, and yet saying nothing too plainly, that the perfection of art here, as in all other cases, consists. But as it was before shown in Sect. II. Chap. III. that the focus of the eye required little alteration after the first half mile of distance, it is evident that on the *distant* surface of water, *all* reflections will be seen plainly; for the same focus adapted to a moderate distance of surface will receive with distinctness rays coming from the sky, or from any other distance, however great. Thus we always see the reflection of Mont Blanc on the Lake of Geneva, whether we take pains to look for it or not, because the water upon which it is cast is itself a mile off; but if we would see the reflection of Mont Blanc in the Lac de Chede, which is close to us,* we must take some trouble about the matter, leave the green snakes swimming upon the surface, and plunge for it. Hence reflections, if viewed collectively, are always clear in proportion to the distance of the water on which they are cast. And now look at Turner's "Ulleswater," or any of his distant

§ 5. All reflections on distant water are distinct.

* The "Lac de Chede" *was*, (alas for the word! it was destroyed by an eboulement three years ago) to my mind, the loveliest thing in Switzerland; a pool of emerald water, clearer than the mountain air around it, and yet greener than the pine boughs whose gloom it imaged, full of bright, waving, forest-like weeds, and peopled by multitudes of lustrous, gliding, innocent serpents, unearthly creatures, which gave it more of the Greek feeling of divinity than is now perhaps left in the whole wide world. It was probably the ground-work of many of Shelley's noblest descriptive passages. . . .

lake expanses, and you will find every crag and line of the hills rendered in them with absolute fidelity, while the near surface shows nothing but a vague confusion of exquisite and lustrous tint. The reflections even of the clouds will be given far off, while those of near boats and figures will be confused and mixed among each other, except just at the waterline.

And now we see what Vandevelde *ought* to have done with the shadow of his ship spoken of in the first chapter of this section. In such a calm, we should in nature, if we had looked for the reflection, have seen it clear from the waterline to the flag on the mainmast; but in so doing, we should have appeared to ourselves to be looking under the water, and should have lost all feeling of surface. When we looked at the surface of the sea,—as we naturally should,—we should have seen the image of the hull absolutely clear and perfect, because that image is cast on distant water;* but we should have seen the image of the masts and sails gradually more confused as they descended, and the water close to us would have borne only upon its surface a maze of flashing colour and indefinite hue. Had Vandevelde, therefore, given the perfect image of his ship, he would have represented a truth dependent on a particular effort of the eye, and destroyed his surface. But his business was to give, not a distinct reflection, but the colours of the reflection in mystery and disorder upon his near water, all perfectly vivid, but none intelligible; and had he done so, the eye would not have troubled itself to search them out; it would not have cared whence or how the colours came, but it would have felt them to be true and right, and rested satisfied upon the polished surface of the clear sea. Of the perfect truth, the best examples I can give are Turner's "Salt Ash," and "Castle Upuor."

* In all this reasoning, I suppose knowledge in the reader of the optical mode in which reflections are produced; otherwise it can scarcely be understood.

§ 7. Difference
in arrangement
of parts be-
tween the re-
flected object
and its image.

Be it next observed, that the reflection of all near objects is, by our fifth rule, not an exact copy of the parts of them which we see above the water, but a totally different view and arrangement of them, that which we should get if we were looking at them from beneath. Hence we see the dark sides of leaves hanging over a stream, in their reflection, though we see the light sides above, and all objects and groups of objects are thus seen in the reflection under different lights, and in different positions with respect to each other from those which they assume above; some which we see on the bank being entirely lost in their reflection, and others which we cannot see on the bank brought into view. Hence nature contrives never to repeat herself, and the surface of water is not a mockery, but a new view of what is above it. And this difference in what is represented, as well as the obscurity of the representation, is one of the chief sources by which the sensation of surface is kept up in the reality. The reflection is not so remarkable, it does not attract the eye in the same degree when it is entirely different from the images above, as when it mocks them and repeats them, and we feel that the space and surface has colour and character of its own, and that the bank is one thing, and the water another. It is by not making this change manifest, and giving underneath a mere duplicate of what is seen above, that artists are apt to destroy the essence and substance of water, and to drop us through it.

§ 8. Illustrated
from the works
of Turner.

Now one instance will be sufficient to show the exquisite care of Turner in this respect. On the left hand side of his "Nottingham," the water (a smooth canal) is terminated by a bank fenced up with wood, on which, just at the edge of the water, stands a white signpost. A quarter of a mile back, the hill on which Nottingham castle stands, rises steeply, nearly to the top of the picture. The upper part of this hill is in bright golden light, and the lower in very deep grey

shadow, against which the white board of the sign-post is seen entirely in light relief, though, being turned from the light, it is itself in delicate middle tint, illumined only on the edge. But the image of all this in the canal is very different. First, we have the reflection of the piles of the bank, sharp and clear, but under this, we have not what we see above it, the dark *base* of the hill, (for this being a quarter of a mile back, we could not see over the fence if we were looking from below), but the golden summit of the hill, the shadow of the under part having no record nor place in the reflection. But this summit, being very distant, cannot be seen clearly by the eye while its focus is adapted to the surface of the water, and accordingly its reflection is entirely vague and confused; you cannot tell what it is meant for, it is mere playing golden light. But the sign-post being on the bank close to us, will be reflected clearly, and accordingly, its distinct image is seen in the midst of this confusion. But it now is relieved, not against the dark base, but against the illumined summit of the hill, and it appears therefore, instead of a white space thrown out from blue shade, a dark grey space thrown out from golden light. I do not know that any more magnificent example could be given of concentrated knowledge, or of the daring statement of most difficult truth. For who but this consummate artist would have had courage, even if he had perceived the laws which required it, to undertake in a single small space of water, the painting of an entirely new picture, with all its tones and arrangements altered,—what was made above bright by opposition to blue, being underneath made cool and dark by opposition to gold;—or would have dared to contradict so boldly the ordinary expectation of the uncultivated eye, to find in the reflection a mockery of the reality? But the reward is immediate, for not only is the change most grateful to the eye, and most exquisite as composition, but the

§ 9. The boldness and judgment shown in the observance of it.

surface of the water in consequence of it is felt to be as spacious as it is clear, and the eye rests not on the inverted image of the material objects, but on the element which receives them. And we have a farther instance in this passage of the close study which is required to enjoy the works of Turner, for another artist might have altered the reflection or confused it, but he would not have reasoned upon it so as to find out what the exact alteration must be; and if we had tried to account for the reflection, we should have found it false or inaccurate. But the master mind of Turner, without effort, showers its knowledge into every touch, and we have only to trace out even his slightest passages, part by part, to find in them the universal working of the deepest thought, that consistency of every minor truth which admits of and invites the same ceaseless study as the work of nature herself.

§ 10. The *texture* of surface in Turner's painting of calm water.

There is, however, yet another peculiarity in Turner's painting of smooth water, which, though less deserving of admiration, as being merely a mechanical excellence, is not less wonderful than its other qualities, nor less unique—a peculiar texture, namely, given to the most delicate tints of the surface, when there is little reflection from anything except sky or atmosphere, and which, just at the points where other painters are reduced to paper, gives to the surface of Turner the greatest appearance of substantial liquidity. It is altogether impossible to say how it is produced; it looks like some modification of body colour; but it certainly is not body colour used as by other men, for I have seen this expedient tried over and over again without success; and it is often accompanied by crumbling touches of a dry brush, which never could have been put upon body colour, and which could not have shown through, underneath it. As a piece of mechanical excellence, it is one of the most remarkable things in the works of the master; and it brings the truth of his water-painting up to

the last degree of perfection, often rendering those passages of it the most attractive and delightful, which, from their delicacy and paleness of tint, would have been weak and papery in the hands of any other man. The best instance of it I can give is, I think, the distance of the "Devonport with the Dockyards."

If, then, we consider what will be the effect of the constant observation of all natural laws, down to the most intricate and least apparently important—an observation carried out not merely in large or broad cases, but in every spot and shade of the slightest passages of reflection; if we add to this all that attainment of intricacy and infinity which we have generally described as characteristic of Turner's execution universally; if we suppose, added to this, all that radiance and refinement which we observed to be constant in his colour, brought by the nature of the subject up to their utmost brilliancy and most delicate states of perpetual transition and mystery; if we suppose all this, aided by every mechanical means of giving lustre and light that art can supply, used with the most consummate skill, and if we suppose all this thought, beauty and power applied, manifested and exerted to produce the utmost possible degree of fullness and finish that can be concentrated into given space, we shall have some idea of Turner's painting of calm water universally.

But Turner is not satisfied with this. He is never altogether content unless he can, at the same time that he takes advantage of all the placidity of repose, tell us something either about the past commotion of the water, or of some present stirring of tide or current which its stillness does not show, or give us something or other to think about and reason upon, as well as to look at. Take a few instances. His "Cowes, Isle of Wight," is a summer twilight about half an hour, or more, after sunset. Intensity of repose is the great aim throughout, and the unity of tone of the picture is one of the

§ 11. Its united qualities.

§ 12. Relation of various circumstances of past agitation, &c., by the most trifling incidents, as in the "Cowes."

finest things that Turner has ever done. But there is not only quietness, there is the very deepest solemnity in the whole of the light, as well as in the stillness of the vessels, and Turner wishes to enhance this feeling by representing not only repose, but *power* in repose, the emblem, in the sea, of the quiet ships of war. Accordingly, he takes the greatest possible pains to get his surface polished, calm, and smooth, but he indicates the reflection of a buoy floating a full quarter of a mile off by three black strokes with wide intervals between them, the last of which touches the water within twenty yards of the spectator. Now these three reflections can only indicate the farther sides of three rises of an enormous swell, and give by their intervals of separation, a space of from twelve to twenty yards for the breadth of each wave, including the sweep between them, and this swell is farther indicated by the reflection of the new moon falling in a wide zigzag line. The exceeding majesty which this single circumstance gives to the whole picture, the sublime sensation of power and knowledge of former exertion which we instantly receive from it, if we have but acquaintance with nature enough to understand its language, render this work not only a piece of the most refined truth, (as which I have at present named it) but to my mind, one of the highest pieces of intellectual art existing.

§ 19. In scenes on the Loire and Seine.

Again, in the scene on the Loire, with the square precipice and fiery sunset in the Rivers of France, repose has been aimed at in the same way, and most thoroughly given; but the immense width of the river at this spot makes it look like a lake or sea, and it was therefore necessary that we should be made thoroughly to understand and feel that this is not the calm of still water, but the tranquillity of a majestic current. Accordingly, a boat swings at anchor on the right; and the stream, dividing at its bow, flows towards us in two long, dark waves, especial attention to which is enforced.

by the one on the left being brought across the reflected stream of sunshine, which it separates, and which is broken in the nearer water by the general undulation and agitation caused by the boat's wake; a wake caused by the water's passing it, not by *its* going through the water.

Again, in the "Confluence of the Seine and Marne," we have the repose of the wide river stirred by the paddles of the steam-boat (whose plashing we can almost hear, for we are especially compelled to look at them by their being made the central note of the composition—the blackest object in it, opposed to the strongest light), and this disturbance is not merely caused by the two lines of surge from the boat's wake for any other painter must have given these, but Turner never rests satisfied till he has told you *all* in his power; and he has not only given the receding surges, but these have gone on to the shore, have struck upon it, and been beaten back from it, in another line of weaker contrary surges, whose point of intersection with those of the wake itself is marked by the sudden sub-division and disorder of the waves of the wake on the extreme left, and whose reverted direction is exquisitely given where their lines cross the calm water, close to the spectator, and marked also by the sudden vertical spring of the spray just where they intersect the swell from the boat; and in order that we may fully be able to account for these reverted waves, we are allowed, just at the extreme right hand limit of the picture, to see the point where the swell from the boat meets the shore. But it is only by persons who have most carefully watched the effect of a steamer's wake when she is running close by shore, that the exquisite accuracy with which all this is told and represented is at all appreciable. In the "Chaise de Gargantua" we have the still water lulled by the dead calm which usually precedes the most violent storms, suddenly broken upon by a tremendous burst of wind from the gathered thunder-clouds, scattering the

§ 14. Expression of contrary waves caused by recoil from shore.

§ 15. Various
other instances.

boats, and razing the water into rage, except where it is sheltered by the hills. In the "Jumieges" and "Vernon" we have farther instances of local agitation, caused, in the one instance, by a steamer, in the other, by the large water-wheels under the bridge, not, observe, a mere splashing about the wheel itself, this is too far off to be noticeable, so that we should not have even known that the objects beneath the bridge were water-wheels, but for the agitation recorded a quarter of a mile down the river, where its current crosses the sunlight. And thus there will scarcely ever be found a piece of quiet water by Turner, without some story in it of one kind or another; sometimes a slight, but beautiful incident—oftener, as in the "Cowes," something on which the whole sentiment and intention of the picture in a great degree depends; but invariably presenting some new instance of varied knowledge and observation, some fresh appeal to the highest faculties of the mind. There is always a deep truth, which must be reasoned upon and comprehended in them before their beauty can be felt.

§ 16. Turner's
painting of distant
expanses
of water.—
Calm, interrupted
by
ripple;

Of extended surfaces of water, as rendered by Turner, the "Loch Katrine" and "Derwent-water," of the illustrations to Scott, and the "Loch Lomond," vignette in Rogers' Poems are characteristic instances. The first of these gives us the most distant part of the lake entirely under the influence of a light breeze, and therefore entirely without reflections of the objects on its borders; but the whole near half is untouched by the wind, and on that is cast the image of the upper part of Ben-Venue and of the islands. The second gives us the surface, with just so much motion upon it as to prolong, but not to destroy the reflections of the dark woods,—reflections only interrupted by the ripple of the boat's wake. And the third gives us an example of the whole surface so much affected by ripple as to bring into exercise all those laws which we have

§ 17. and rippled,
crossed
by sunshine.

seen so grossly violated by Canaletti. We see in the nearest boat that though the lines of the gunwale are much blacker and more conspicuous than that of the cutwater, yet the gunwale lines, being nearly horizontal, have no reflection whatsoever, while the line of the cutwater, being vertical, has a distinct reflection of three times its own length. But even these tremulous reflections are only visible as far as the islands; beyond them, as the lake retires into distance, we find it receives only the reflection of the grey light from the clouds, and runs in one flat white field up between the hills; and besides all this, we have another phenomenon, quite new, given to us,—the brilliant gleam of light along the centre of the lake. This is not caused by ripple, for it is cast on a surface rippled all over; but it is what we could not have without ripple,—the light of a passage of sunshine. I have already (Chap. I. § 9.) explained the cause of this phenomenon, which never can by any possibility take place on calm water, being the multitudinous reflection of the sun from the sides of the ripples, causing an appearance of local light and shadow; and being dependent, like real light and shadow on the passage of the clouds, though the dark parts of the water are the reflections of the clouds, not the shadows of them; and the bright parts are the reflections of the sun, and not the light of it. This little vignette, then, will entirely complete the system of Turner's universal truth in quiet water. We have seen every phenomenon given by him,—the clear reflection, the prolonged reflection, the reflection broken by ripple, and finally the ripple broken by light and shade; and it is especially to be observed how careful he is, in this last case, when he uses the apparent light and shade, to account for it by showing us in the whiteness of the lake beyond, its universal subjection to ripple.

We have not spoken of Turner's magnificent draw-
ing of distant rivers, which, however, is dependent only

§ 18. His drawing of distant rivers.

on more complicated application of the same laws, with exquisite perspective. The sweeps of river in the "Dryburgh," (Illustrations to Scott,) and "Melrose," are bold and characteristic examples, as well as the "Rouen" from St. Catherine's Hill, and the "Caudebec," in the Rivers of France. The only thing which in these works requires particular attention, is the care with which the height of the observer above the river is indicated by the loss of the reflections of its banks. This is, perhaps, shown most clearly in the "Caudebec." If we had been on a level with the river, its whole surface would have been darkened by the reflection of the steep and high banks; but being far above it, we can see no more of the image than we could of the hill itself, if it were actually reversed under the water, and therefore we see that Turner gives us only a narrow line of dark water, immediately under the precipice, the broad surface reflecting only the sky. This is also finely shown on the left-hand side of the "Dryburgh."

§ 19. And of surface associated with mist.

Of Turner's more difficult effects of calm surface associated with rising mist, it is impossible to speak partially, we must consider them as associated with effects of light, and many other matters of difficult investigation, only to be judged of by contemplating each picture as a whole. The "Nemi," "Oberwesel," and "Ehrenbreitstein," have been already instanced, (Sect. III. Chap. IV.) the latter being especially remarkable for its expression of water-surface, seen not through, but *under* mist. The "Constance" is a more marvellous example than all, giving the vast lake, with its surface white with level mist, lying league beyond league in the wan twilight, like a fallen space of moony sky.

§ 20. His drawing of falling water, with peculiar expression of weight.

But we must pass to observe Turner's victory over greater difficulties. The chief peculiarity about his drawing of falling or running water, is his fearless and full rendering of its *forms*. He never loses himself and

his subject in the splash of the fall, his presence of mind never fails as he goes down; he does not blind us with the spray, or veil the countenance of his fall with its own drapery. A little crumbling white, or lightly rubbed paper, will soon give the effect of indiscriminate foam; but nature gives more than foam—she shows beneath it, and through it, a peculiar character of exquisitely studied form bestowed on every wave and line of fall, and it is this variety of definite character which Turner always aims at, rejecting, as much as possible, everything that conceals or overwhelms it. Thus, in the “Upper Fall of the Tees,” though the whole basin of the fall is blue and dim with the rising vapour, yet the whole attention of the spectator is directed to that which it was peculiarly difficult to render, the concentric zones and delicate curves of the falling water itself; and it is impossible to express with what exquisite accuracy these are given. They are the characteristic of a powerful stream descending without impediment or break, but from a narrow channel, so as to expand as it falls. They are the constant form which such a stream assumes as it descends; and yet I think it would be difficult to point to another instance of their being rendered in art. You will find nothing in the waterfalls even of our best painters, but springing lines of parabolic descent, and splashing, shapeless foam, and in consequence, though they may make you understand the swiftness of the water, they never let you feel the weight of it; the stream in their hands looks *active*, not *supine*, as if it leaped, not as if it fell. Now water will leap a little way, it will leap down a weir or over a stone, but it tumbles over a high fall like this, and it is when we have lost the parabolic line, and arrived at the catenary,—when we have lost the *spring* of the fall, and arrived at the *plunge* of it, that we begin really to feel its weight and wildness. Where water takes its first leap

§ 21. The abandonment and plunge of great cataracts. How given by him.

from the top, it is cool, and collected, and uninteresting, and mathematical, but it is when it finds that it has got into a scrape, and has farther to go than it thought for, that its character comes out; it is then that it begins to writhe, and twist, and sweep out zone after zone in wilder stretching as it falls, and to send down the rocket-like, lance-pointed, whizzing shafts at its sides, sounding for the bottom. And it is this prostration, this hopeless abandonment of its ponderous power to the air, which is always peculiarly expressed by Turner, and especially in the case before us; while our other artists, keeping to the parabolic line, where they do not lose themselves in smoke and foam, make their cataract look muscular and wiry, and may consider themselves fortunate if they can keep it from stopping. I believe the majesty of motion which Turner has given by these concentric catenary lines must be felt even by those who have never seen a high waterfall, and therefore cannot appreciate their exquisite fidelity to nature.

In the "Chain Bridge over the Tees," this passiveness and swinging of the water to and fro are yet more remarkable, while we have another characteristic of a great waterfall given to us, that the wind, in this instance coming up the valley against the current, takes the spray up off the edges, and carries it back in little torn, reverted rags and threads, seen in delicate form against the darkness on the left. But we must understand a little more about the nature of running water before we can appreciate the drawing either of this, or any other of Turner's torrents.

§22. Difference in the action of water, when continuous and when interrupted. The interrupted stream fills the hollows of its bed.

When water, not in very great body, runs in a rocky bed much interrupted by hollows, so that it can rest every now and then in a pool as it goes along, it does not acquire a continuous velocity of motion. It pauses after every leap, and curdles about, and rests a little, and then goes on again, and if in this comparatively tranquil

and rational state of mind it meets with any obstacle, as a rock or stone, it parts on each side of it with a little bubbling foam, and goes round, if it comes to a step in its bed, it leaps it lightly, and then after a little plashing at the bottom, stops again to take breath. But if its bed be on a continuous slope, not much interrupted by hollows, so that it cannot rest, or if its own mass be so increased by flood that its usual resting places are not sufficient for it, but that it is perpetually pushed out of them by the following current, before it has had time to tranquillize itself, it of course gains velocity with every yard that it runs; the impetus got at one leap is carried to the credit of the next, until the whole stream becomes one mass of unchecked, accelerating motion. Now when water in this state comes to an obstacle, it does not part at it, but clears it, like a race-horse, and when it comes to a hollow, it does not fill it up and run out leisurely at the other side, but it rushes down into it and comes up again on the other side, as a ship into the hollow of the sea. Hence the whole appearance of the bed of the stream is changed, and all the lines of the water altered in their nature. The quiet stream is a succession of leaps and pools; the leaps are light and springy, and parabolic, and make a great deal of splashing when they tumble into the pool, then we have a space of quiet curdling water, and another similar leap below. But the stream when it has gained an impetus, takes the shape of its bed, never stops, is equally deep, and equally swift every where, goes down into every hollow, not with a leap, but with a swing, not foaming, nor splashing, but in the bending line of a strong sea-wave, and comes up again on the other side, over rock and ridge, with the ease of a bounding leopard. The finest instance that I know, of this state of water, is the course of the Dranse, near Martigny. That river has just descended a fall of six thousand feet in twenty miles,

§ 23. But the continuous stream takes the shape of its bed.

without, as far as I know, one break, stop, or resting-place in the whole distance; and its velocity and power are at last so tremendous, that if it meets a rock seven or eight feet above the level of its bed, it will neither part nor foam, nor express any concern about the matter, but clears it in a smooth dome of water, without apparent exertion, coming down again as smoothly on the other side, the whole surface of the surge being drawn into parallel lines by its extreme velocity, but quite foamless, except in places where the form of the bed opposes itself at some direct angle to such a line of fall, and causes a breaker; so that the whole river has the appearance of a deep and raging sea. Thus then, in the water which has gained an impetus, we have the most exquisite arrangements of curved lines, perpetually changing from convex to concave, and *vice versa*, following every swell and hollow of the bed with their modulating grace, little broken by foam, and all in unison of motion, presenting perhaps the most beautiful series of inorganic forms which nature can possibly produce; for the sea runs too much into similar and concave curves with sharp edges, but every motion of the torrent is united, and all its curves are modifications of the line of beauty, quite unbroken by edges, except here and there where a rock rises too high to be cleared and causes a breaker.

§ 24. Its exquisite curved lines.

§ 25. Turner's careful choice of the historical truth.

And now we can understand the peculiar excellence of Turner's torrent drawing. With his usual keen perception of all that is most essential in nature; of those qualities and truths which tell us most about the past as well as the present, he seizes on these curved lines of the torrent, not only as the most beautiful forms of nature, but because they are an instant expression of the utmost power and velocity, and tell us how the torrent has been flowing before we see it. For the leap and splash might be seen in the sudden freakishness of a quiet stream, or the fall of a rivulet

over a mill-dam; but the undulating line is the *exclusive* attribute of the mountain-torrent, whose fall and fury have made the valleys echo for miles; and thus the moment we see one of its curves over a stone in the foreground, we know how far it has come, and how fiercely. And in the drawing we have been speaking of, the "Lower Fall of the Tees;" in the foreground of the "Killiecrankie" and "Rhymer's Glen," and of the "St. Maurice," in Rogers' Italy, we shall find the most exquisite instances of the use of such lines; but the most perfect of all in the "Llanthony Abbey," which may be considered as the standard of torrent-drawing. The chief light of the picture here falls upon the surface of the stream, swelled by recent rain, and its mighty waves come rolling down close to the spectator, green and clear, but pale with anger, in gigantic, unbroken, oceanic curves, bending into each other without break or foam, though jets of fiery spray are cast into the air along the rocky shore, and rise in the sunshine in dusty vapour.* The whole surface is one united race of mad motion; all the waves dragged, as I have described, into lines and furrows by their swiftness, and every one of these fine forms is drawn with the most studied chiaroscuro of delicate colour, greys and greens, as silvery and pure as the finest passages of Paul Veronese, and with a refinement of execution which the eye strains itself in looking into. The rapidity and gigantic force of this torrent, the exquisite refinement of its colour, and the vividness of foam which is obtained through a general middle tint, render it about the most perfect piece of painting of running water in existence.

§ 26. His exquisite drawing of the continuous torrent in the "Llanthony Abbey."

Now this picture is, as was noticed in our former reference to it, full of expression of every kind of motion: the clouds are in wild haste; the sun is gleaming fast and fitfully through the leaves; the rain drifting

§ 27. And of the interrupted torrent in the "Mercury and Argus."

* Compare Note, Sect. III., Chap. IV., § 13.

away along the hill-side; and the torrent, the principal object, to complete the impression, is made the wildest thing of all, and not only wild before us, and with us, but bearing with it in its every motion, from its long course, the record of its rage. Now observe how differently Turner uses his torrent when the spirit of the picture is repose. In the "Mercury and Argus," we have also a stream in the foreground; but, in coming down to us, we see it stopping twice in two quiet and glassy pools, upon which the drinking cattle cast an unstirred image. From the nearest of these, the water leaps in three cascades into another basin close to us; it trickles in silver threads through the leaves at its edge, and falls tinkling and splashing (though in considerable body) into the pool, stirring its quiet surface, at which a bird is stooping to drink, with concentric and curdling ripples, which divide round the stone at its farthest border, and descend in sparkling foam over the lip of the basin, presenting us, in the rest of their progress, with that most difficult of all appearances for a painter to render, —a torrent descending steeply as it retires from us. Thus we find, in every case, the system of Turner's truth entirely unbroken, every phase and phenomenon of nature being recorded, each recorded with unequalled fidelity, and each recorded exactly where it is most valuable and impressive.

§ 28. Various cases.

We have not, however, space to follow out the variety of his torrent-drawing. The above two examples are characteristic of the two great divisions or classes of torrents—that whose motion is continuous, and whose motion is interrupted: all drawing of running water will resolve itself into the representation of one or other of these. The descent of the distant stream in the vignette to the "Boy of Egremont" is slight, but very striking; and the "Junction of the Greta and Tees," a singular instance of the bold drawing of the complicated forms of a running stream among multitudinous

rocks. But it is time for us to pass to the contemplation of Turner's drawing of the sea.

The idea of sea which an unobservant landsman obtains by standing on the beach is a peculiarly limited and imperfect one. The curl of the breakers under ordinary circumstances is uniform and monotonous, both in its own form, and in its periodical repetition. The size of the waves out at sea is neither seen nor comprehended, and the image carried away is little more than that of an extensive field of large waves, all much resembling each other, moving gradually to the beach, and breaking in the same lines and forms.

But such is not the real nor essential character of the sea. Afloat, even twenty yards from the shore, we receive a totally different impression. Every wave around us appears vast—every one different from all the rest—and the breakers, whose curl, seen from the land, had something of smallness and meanness in its contour, present, now that we see them with their backs towards us, the grand, extended, and varied lines of long curvature, which are peculiarly expressive both of velocity and power. If, in such a position, whether in a boat, or on some isolated rock, (the last by far the best,) on a rocky coast, we abandon ourselves for hours to the passive reception of the great and essential impressions of that which is around us, the only way of arriving at a true feeling of its spirit, the three great ideas which we shall carry away with us will be those of recklessness, power, and breadth;—recklessness, manifested in mad, perpetual, changeful, undirected motion; not of wave after wave, as it appears from the shore, but of the very same water rising and falling. When we see the waves successively approach and break, each appears to the mind a separate individual, whose part being performed, it perishes, and is succeeded by another; and there is nothing in this to impress us with the idea of restlessness, any more than

§ 29. His drawing of the sea. The essential ideas characteristic of the ocean.

§ 30. Are recklessness, power, and breadth.

in any successive and continuous functions of life and death. But it is when we perceive that it is no succession of wave, but the same water, constantly rising, and crashing, and recoiling, and rolling in again in new forms and with fresh fury, that we perceive the perturbed spirit and feel the intensity of its unwearied rage. The sensation of power is also trebled; for not only is the vastness of apparent size much increased, but the whole action is different; it is not a passive wave, rolling sleepily forward until it tumbles heavily, prostrated upon the beach, but a sweeping exertion of tremendous and living strength, which does not now appear to *fall*, but to *burst* upon the shore, which never perishes, but recoils and recovers. Finally, the sensation of *breadth* is peculiarly impressed, not by the extent of sea itself, but by the enormous sweep and hollow of every wave, of which no idea whatever can be formed from the beach, and by the grand unity of the curves of the breakers, which now appear to fall not in curls, but in precipices.

§ 31. How Turner renders them in the "Hero and Leander."

Now they are these grand characters of the Sea which Turner invariably aims at, and never rests satisfied unless he has given; and in consequence, even in his coast seas, he almost always places the spectator, not on the shore, but twenty or thirty yards from it, beyond the first range of the breakers, as in the "Langharne," "Land's End," "Fowey," and "Dunbar." But, never failing to give at least *one* example of every truth, he has presented us with one most studied representation of a rolling sea, as seen from the shore, in the "Hero and Leander." The drawing of the approaching and falling breakers, under the moonlight, in this picture, must, I believe, remain, like the memory of some of the mighty scenes of nature herself, impressed for ever on the minds of all who have once seen it.

§ 32. In the "Langharne."

But it is on such wild coast seas as those of the "Land's End" and "Langharne," that Turner's power is chiefly con-

centrated. The latter has been well engraved, and may be taken as a standard of the expression of fitfulness and power. The grand division of the whole space of the sea by a few dark continuous furrows of tremendous swell (the breaking of one of which alone has strewed the rocks in front with ruin), furnishes us with an estimate of space and strength, which at once reduces the men upon the shore to insects; and yet through this terrific simplicity there is indicated a fitfulness and fury in the tossing of the individual lines, which gives to the whole sea a wild, unwearyed, reckless incoherency, like that of an enraged multitude, whose masses act together in phrenzy, while not one individual feels as another. Especial attention is to be directed to the flatness of all the lines; for the same principle holds in sea, which we have seen in mountains. All the size and sublimity of nature is given not by the height, but by the breadth of her masses: and Turner, by following her in her sweeping lines, while he does not lose the elevation of its surges, adds in a ten-fold degree to their power: further, observe the peculiar expression of *weight* which there is in Turner's waves, precisely of the same kind which we saw in his waterfall. We have not a cutting, springing, elastic line—no jumping or leaping in the waves: *that* is the characteristic of Chelsea Reach or Hampstead Ponds in a storm. But the surges of Turner roll and plunge with such prostration and hurling of their mass against the shore, that we feel the rocks are shaking under them; and, to add yet more to this impression, observe how little, comparatively, they are broken by the wind; above the floating wood, and along the shore, we have indication of a line of torn spray; but it is a mere fringe along the ridge of the surge—no interference with its gigantic body. The wind has no power over its tremendous unity of force and weight. Finally, observe how, on the rocks on the left, the violence and swiftness of the rising wave is indicated by precisely the same lines which we saw

§ 33. With peculiar expression of weight.

were indicative of fury in the torrent. The water on these rocks is the body of the wave which has just broken, rushing up over them; and in doing so, like the torrent, it does not break, nor foam, nor part upon the rock, but accommodates itself to every one of its swells and hollows, with undulating lines, whose grace and variety might alone serve us for a day's study; and it is only where two streams of this rushing water meet in the hollow of the rock, that their force is shown by the vertical bound of the spray.

§ 33. Peculiar action of recoiling waves.

In the distance of this grand picture, there are two waves which entirely depart from the principle observed by all the rest, and spring high into the air. They have a message for us which it is important that we should understand. Their leap is not a preparation for breaking, neither is it caused by their meeting with a rock. It is caused by their encounter with the recoil of the preceding wave. When a large surge, in the act of breaking, just as it curls over, is hurled against the face either of a wall or of a vertical rock, the sound of the blow is not a crash, nor a roar, it is a report as loud as, and in every respect similar to that of a great gun, and the wave is dashed back from the rock with force scarcely diminished, but reversed in direction,—it now recedes from the shore, and at the instant that it encounters the following breaker, the result is the vertical bound of both which is here rendered by Turner. Such a recoiling wave will proceed out to sea through ten or twelve ranges of following breakers, before it is overpowered. The effect of the encounter is more completely and palpably given in the “*Quillebœuf*,” in the Rivers of France. It is peculiarly instructive here, as informing us of the nature of the coast, and the force of the waves, far more clearly than any spray about the rocks themselves could have done. But the effect of the blow at the shore itself is given in the “*Land's-End*,” and vignette to “*Lycidas*.” Under

§ 34. And of the stroke of a breaker on the shore.

favourable circumstances, with an advancing tide under a heavy gale, where the breakers feel the shore underneath them a moment before they touch the rock, so as to nod over when they strike, the effect is nearly incredible except to an eye-witness. I have seen the whole body of the wave rise in one white, vertical, broad fountain, eighty feet above the sea, half of it beaten so fine as to be borne away by the wind, the rest turning in the air when exhausted, and falling back with a weight and crash like that of an enormous waterfall. This is given most completely in the "Lycidas," and the blow of a less violent wave among broken rocks, not meeting it with an absolute wall, along the shore of the "Land's-End." This last picture is the most faithful study in existence of a sea whose whole organization has been broken up by constant recoils from a rocky coast. The "Langharne" gives the surge and weight of the ocean in a gale, on a comparatively level shore, but the "Land's-End" the entire disorder of the surges when every one of them, divided and entangled among promontories as it rolls in, and beaten back part by part from walls of rock on this side and that side, recoils like the defeated division of a great army, throwing all behind it into disorder, breaking up the succeeding waves into vertical ridges, which in their turn, yet more totally shattered upon the shore, retire in more hopeless confusion, until the whole surface of the sea becomes one dizzy whirl of rushing, writhing, tortured, undirected rage, bounding and crashing and coiling in an anarchy of enormous power, subdivided into myriads of waves, of which every one is not, be it remembered, a separate surge, but part and portion of a vast one, actuated by internal power, and giving in every direction the mighty undulation of impetuous line which glides over the rocks and writhes in the wind, overwhelming the one and piercing the other with the form, fury, and swiftness of a sheet of lambent fire. And

§ 34. General character of sea on a rocky coast given by Turner in the "Land's-End."

throughout the rendering of all this, there is not one false curve given, not one which is not the perfect expression of visible motion; and the forms of the infinite sea are drawn throughout with that utmost mastery of art, which through the deepest study of every line, makes every line appear the wildest child of chance, while yet each is in itself a subject and a picture, different from all else around. Of the colour of this magnificent sea I have before spoken, it is a solemn green grey, (with its foam seen dimly through the darkness of twilight), modulated with the fulness, changefulness, and sadness of a deep, wild melody.

§ 37. And of sea after a continued gale, in the "Snow-storm."

Few people, comparatively, have ever seen the effect on the sea of a powerful gale continued without intermission for three or four days and nights, and to those who have not, I believe it must be unimaginable, not from the mere force or size of surge, but from the complete annihilation of the limit between sea and air. The water from its prolonged agitation is beaten, not into mere creaming foam, but into masses of accumulated yeast*, which hang in ropes and wreaths from wave to wave, and where one curls over to break, form a festoon like a drapery, from its edge; these are taken up by the wind, not in dissipating dust, but bodily, in writhing, hanging, coiling masses, which make the air white and thick as with snow, only the flakes are a foot or two long each; the surges themselves are full of foam in their very bodies, underneath, making them white all through, as the water is under a great cataract, and their masses, being thus half water and half air, are torn to pieces by the wind whenever they rise, and carried away in roaring smoke which chokes and strangles like actual water. Add to this, that when the air has been exhausted of its moisture by long rain, the spray of the

* The yesty waves

Confound and swallow navigation up.

Macbeth, Act. IV., Scene I.

sea is caught by it as described above. (Sect. III. Ch. IV. § 13,) and covers its surface not merely with the smoke of finely divided water, but with boiling mist; imagine also the low rain-clouds brought down to the very level of the sea, as I have often seen them, whirling and flying in rags and fragments from wave to wave, and finally, conceive the surges themselves in their utmost pitch of power, velocity, vastness, and madness, lifting themselves in precipices and peaks, furrowed with their whirl of ascent, through all this chaos; and you will understand that there is indeed no distinction left between the sea and air, that no object, nor horizon, nor any landmark or natural evidence of position is left, that the heaven is all spray, and the ocean all cloud, and that you can see no farther in any direction than you could see through a cataract. Suppose the effect of the first sunbeam sent from above to show this annihilation to itself, and you have the sea picture of last year's Academy—the "Snow-storm," one of the very grandest statements of sea motion, mist, and light that has ever been put on canvass, even by Turner. Of course it was not understood; his finest works never are; but there was some apology for the public's not comprehending this, for few people have had the opportunity of seeing the sea at such a time, and when they have, cannot face it. To hold by a mast or a rock, and watch it, is a prolonged endurance of drowning which few people have courage to go through. To those who have, it is one of the noblest lessons of nature.

But, beyond dispute, the noblest sea that Turner has ever painted, and therefore the noblest ever painted by man, is that of the "Slave Ship," the chief Academy picture of the exhibition of 1840. It is a sunset on the Atlantic, after prolonged storm; but the storm is partially lulled, and the torn and streaming rain-clouds are moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollow

§ 38. Turner's noblest work, the painting of the deep open sea in the "Slave-ship."

of the night. The whole surface of sea included in the picture is divided into two ridges of enormous swell, not high, nor local, but a low, broad heaving of the whole ocean, like the lifting of its bosom by deep drawn breath after the torture of the storm. Between these two ridges the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dying it with an awful, but glorious light, the intense and lurid splendour which burns like gold, and bathes like blood. Along this fiery path and valley, the tossing waves by which the swell of the sea is restlessly divided, lift themselves in dark, indefinite, fantastic forms, each casting a faint and ghastly shadow behind it along the illumined foam. They do not rise everywhere, but three or four together in wild groups, fitfully and furiously, as the under strength of the swell compels or permits them, leaving between them treacherous spaces of level and whirling water, now lighted with green and lamp-like fire, now flashing back the gold of the declining sun, now fearfully dyed from above with the indistinguishable images of the burning clouds, which fall upon them in flakes of crimson and scarlet, and give to the reckless waves the added motion of their own fiery flying. Purple and blue, the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast upon the mist of the night, which gathers cold and low, advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty* ship as it labours amidst the lightning of the sea, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood, girded with condemnation in that fearful hue, which signs the sky with horror, and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight,—and cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea.

§ 37. Its united excellencies and perfection, as a whole.

I believe, if I were reduced to rest Turner's immortality upon any single work, I should choose this. Its daring conception—ideal in the highest sense of the

* She is a slaver, throwing her slaves overboard to escape. The near sea is encumbered with corpses.

word, is based on the purest truth, and wrought out with the concentrated knowledge of a life; its colour is absolutely perfect, not one false or morbid hue in any part or line, and so modulated that every square inch of canvass is a perfect composition; its drawing as accurate as fearless; the ship buoyant, bending, and full of motion; its tones as true as they are wonderful;* and the whole picture dedicated to the most sublime of subjects and impressions—(completing thus the perfect system of all truth, which we have shown to be formed by Turner's works)—the power, majesty, and deathfulness of the open, deep, illimitable sea.

* There is a piece of tone of the same kind, equal in one part, but not so united with the rest of the picture, in the storm scene illustrative of the Antiquary,—a sunset light on polished sea. I ought to have particularly mentioned the sea in the "Lowestoffe," as a piece of the cutting motion of shallow water, under storm, altogether in grey, which should be especially contrasted, as a piece of colour, with the greys of Vandevelde. And the sea in the "Great Yarmouth" should have been noticed for its expression of water in violent agitation, seen in enormous extent from a great elevation. There is almost every form of sea in it—rolling waves dashing on the pier—successive breakers rolling to the shore—a vast horizon of multitudinous waves—the *ποντίων κυμάτων ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα*, and winding canals of calm water along the sands, bringing fragments of bright sky down into their yellow waste. You may tire yourself by walking over the extent of that shore.

SECTION VI.

OF TRUTH OF VEGETATION.—CONCLUSION.



CHAPTER I.

OF TRUTH OF VEGETATION.

§ 1. Extreme difficulty of representing foliage, and ease with which the truth of its representation may be determined.

WE have now arrived at the consideration of what was, with the old masters, the subject of most serious and perpetual study. If they do not give us truth here, they cannot have the faculty of truth in them; for foliage is the chief component part of all their pictures, and is finished by them with a care and labour, which, if bestowed without attaining truth, must prove either their total bluntness of perception, or total impotence of hand. Among the Italian school I can scarcely recollect a single instance in which foliage does not form the greater part of the picture; in fact, they are rather painters of tree-portrait than landscape painters; for rocks, and sky, and architecture are usually mere accessories and backgrounds to the dark masses of laborious foliage, of which the composition principally consists. And it is a daring choice; for of all objects that defeat and defy the utmost efforts of the painter to approach their beauty, a noble tree is the most inimitable, and I scarcely know a more hopeless state of discouragement—a more freezing and fettering sensa-

tion of absolute impotence, than that which comes over the artist in his forest walks, as he sees the floor, and the pillars, and the roof of the great temple, one labyrinth of loveliness, one wilderness of perfection, with the chequering sunbeams dancing before him like mocking spirits; and the merry leaves laughing and whispering about him in the pride of their beauty as knowing that he cannot catch nor imitate one ray, nor one form of their hues and their multitude.

Although, however, there is insuperable difficulty in the painting of foliage, there is fortunately little difficulty in ascertaining the comparative truth of the representation; for wherever specific form and character is organized and complete, it is easy, without requiring any laborious attention or extraordinary knowledge in the reader, to demonstrate to him quite as much of the truth or falsehood of various representations of it, as may serve to determine the character and rank of the painter.

It will be best to begin as nature does, with the stems and branches, and then to put the leaves on. And in speaking of trees generally, be it observed, when I say *all* trees, I mean only those ordinary forest or copse trees of Europe, which are the chief subjects of the landscape painter. I do not mean to include palms and bananas, and every kind of foliage which by any accident can find its way into a picture, but the ordinary trees of Europe,—oak, elm, ash, hazel, willow, birch, beech, poplar, chesnut, mulberry, olive, carubbe, and such others. I do not purpose to examine the characteristics of each tree; it will be enough to observe the laws common to all. First, then, neither the stems nor the boughs of any of the above trees *taper*, except where they fork. . . . Wherever a stem sends off a branch, or a branch a lesser bough, or a lesser bough a bud, the stem or the branch are, on the instant, less in diameter by the exact quantity of the

§ 2. Laws common to all forest trees. Their branches do not taper, but only divide.

branch or the bough they have sent off, and they remain precisely of the same diameter; or if there be any change, rather increase than diminish until they send off another branch or bough. This law is imperative and without exception; no bough, nor stem, nor twig, ever tapering or becoming narrower towards its extremity by a hair's-breadth, save where it parts with some portion of its substance at a fork or bud, so that if all the twigs and sprays at the top and sides of the tree, which are, and *have been*, could be united without loss of space, they would form a round log of the diameter of the trunk from which they spring.

§ 3. Appearance of tapering caused by frequent buds.

But as the trunks of most trees send off twigs and sprays of light under foliage, of which every individual fibre takes precisely its own thickness of wood from the parent stem, and as many of these drop off, leaving nothing but a small excrescence to record their existence, there is frequently a slight and delicate appearance of tapering bestowed on the trunk itself, while the same operation takes place much more extensively in the branches, it being natural to almost all trees to send out from their young limbs more wood than they can support, which, as the stem increases, gets contracted at the point of insertion, so as to check the flow of the sap, and then dies and drops off, leaving all along the bough, first on one side, then on another, a series of small excrescences, sufficient to account for a degree of tapering, which is yet so very slight, that if we select a portion of a branch with no real fork or living bough to divide it or diminish it, the tapering is scarcely to be detected by the eye; and if we select a portion without such evidences of past ramification, there will be found none whatsoever.

§ 4. And care of nature to conceal the parallelism.

But nature takes great care and pains to conceal this uniformity in her boughs. They are perpetually parting with little sprays here and there, which steal away their substance cautiously, and where the eye does not

perceive the theft, until, a little way above, it feels the loss; and in the upper parts of the tree, the ramifications take place so constantly and delicately, that the effect upon the eye is precisely the same as if the boughs actually tapered, except here and there, where some avaricious one, greedy of substance, runs on for two or three yards without parting with anything, and becomes ungraceful in so doing.

Hence we see that although boughs may, and must be represented as actually tapering, they must only be so when they are sending off foliage and sprays, and when they are at such a distance that the particular forks and divisions cannot be evident to the eye; and farther, even in such circumstances, the tapering never can be sudden or rapid. No bough ever, with appearance of smooth tapering, loses more than one-tenth of its diameter in a length of ten diameters. Any greater diminution than this must be accounted for by visible ramification, and must take place by steps, at each fork.

§ 5. The degree of tapering which may be represented as continuous.

And therefore we see at once that the stem of Gaspar Poussin's tall tree, on the right of the "La Riccia," in the National Gallery, is a painting of a carrot or a parsnip, not of the trunk of a tree. For, being so near that every individual leaf is visible, we should not have seen, in nature, one branch or stem actually tapering. We should have received an *impression* of graceful diminution; but we should have been able, on examination, to trace it joint by joint, fork by fork, into the thousand minor supports of the leaves. Gaspar Poussin's stem, on the contrary, only sends off four or five minor branches altogether, and both it and they taper violently, and without showing why or wherefore—without parting with a single twig—without showing one vestige of roughness or excrescence—and leaving, therefore, their unfortunate leaves to hold on as best they may. The latter, however, are clever leaves, and support

§ 6. The trees of Gaspar Poussin;

themselves as swarming bees do,—hanging on by each other.

§ 7. And of the Italian school generally, defy this law.

But even this precious piece of work is a jest to the perpetration of the bough at the left-hand upper corner of the picture opposite to it,—the “View near Albano.” This is a fine example of the general system of bough-drawing of the Italian school. It is a representation of an ornamental group of elephants’ tusks, with feathers tied to the ends of them. Not the wildest imagination could ever conjure up in it the remotest resemblance to the bough of a tree. It might be the claws of a witch—the talons of an eagle—the horns of a fiend; but it is a full assemblage of every conceivable falsehood which can be told respecting foliage—a piece of work so barbarous in every way, that one glance at it might prove to the mind of any man of the slightest knowledge of, or feeling for nature, the complete charlatanism and trickery of the whole system of the old landscape painters. For I will depart for once from my usual plan, of abstaining from all assertion of a thing’s being beautiful or otherwise; I will say here, at once, that such drawing as this is as ugly as it is childish, and as painful as it is false; and that the man who could tolerate, much more, who could deliberately set down such a thing on his canvass, had neither eye nor feeling for one single attribute or excellence of God’s works. He might have drawn the other stem in excusable ignorance, or under some false impression of being able to improve upon nature; but *this* is conclusive and unpardonable. Again, take the stem of the chief tree in Claude’s “Narcissus.” It is a very faithful portrait of a large boa-constrictor, with a handsome tail; the kind of trunk which young ladies at fashionable boarding-schools represent with nosegays at the top of them, by way of forest scenery.

§ 8. The truth,

But let us refresh ourselves for a moment, by look-

ing at real art. We need not go to Turner*, we will go to the man who next to him is unquestionably the greatest master of foliage in Europe—J. D. Harding. Take the trunk of the largest stone-pine, Plate 25, in the "Park and the Forest." For the first nine or ten feet from the ground it does not lose one hair's-breadth of its diameter. But the shoot, broken off, just under the crossing part of the distant tree, is followed by an instant diminution of the trunk, perfectly appreciable both by the eye and the compasses. Again, the stem maintains undiminished thickness, up to the two shoots on the left, from the loss of which it suffers again perceptibly. On the right, immediately above, is the stump of a very large bough, whose loss reduces the trunk suddenly to about two-thirds of what it was at the root. Diminished again, less considerably, by the minor branch close to this stump, it now retains its diameter up to the three branches, broken off just under the head, where it once more loses in diameter, and finally branches into the multitude of head-boughs, of which not one will be found tapering in any part, but losing themselves gradually by division among their off-shoots and spray. Now this is nature, and beauty too.

as it is given by
J. D. Harding.

But the old masters are not satisfied with drawing carrots for boughs. Nature can be violated in more ways than one, and the industry with which they seek out and adopt every conceivable mode of contradicting her is matter of no small interest. It is evident from what we have above stated of the structure of all trees, that as no boughs diminish where they do not fork, so they cannot fork without diminishing. It is impossible that the smallest shoot can be sent out of a bough without a diminution of the diameter above it; and wherever a branch goes off it must not only be less in diameter than the bough from which it springs, but the bough

§ 9. Boughs, in consequence of this law, *must* diminish where they divide. Those of the old masters often do not.

* Compare § 12.

beyond the fork must be less by precisely the quantity of the branch it has sent off. Now observe the bough underneath the first bend of the great stem in Claude's "Narcissus," it sends off four branches like the ribs of a leaf. The two lowest of these are both quite as quick as the parent stem, and the stem itself is much thicker after it has sent off the first one than it was before. The top boughs of the central tree, in the "Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca," ramify in the same scientific way!

§ 10. Boughs must multiply as they diminish. Those of the old masters do not.

But there are further conclusions to be drawn from this great principle in trees. As they only diminish where they divide, their increase of number is in precise proportion to their diminution of size, so that whenever we come to the extremities of boughs, we must have a multitude of sprays sufficient to make up, if they were united, the bulk of that from which they spring. Where a bough divides into two equal ramifications, the diameter of each of the two is about two-thirds that of the single one, and the sum of their diameters, therefore, one-fourth greater than the diameter of the single one. Hence, if no boughs died or were lost, the quantity of wood in the sprays would appear one-fourth greater than would be necessary to make up the thickness of the trunk. But the lost boughs remove the excess, and therefore, speaking broadly, the diameters of the outer boughs put together would generally just make up the diameter of the trunk. Now mathematical precision in representing this, is neither desirable nor possible. All that is required is just so much observance of the general principle as may make the eye feel satisfied that there is something like the same quantity of wood in the sprays which there is in the stem. But to do this there must be, what there always is in nature, an exceeding complexity of the outer sprays. This complexity gradually increases towards their extremities, of course

exactly in proportion to the slenderness of the twigs. The slenderer they become, the more there are of them, until at last, at the extremities of the tree, they form a mass of intricacy, which in winter, when it can be seen, is scarcely distinguishable from fine herbage, and is beyond all power of representation, twig for twig, it can only be given by a mass of involved strokes. Also, as they shoot out in every direction, some are nearer, some more distant; some distinct, some faint; and their intersections and relations of distance are marked with the most exquisite gradations of aerial perspective. Now it will be found universally in the works of the Italian school, that the boughs do *not* get in the least complex or multiplied towards the extremities—that each large limb forks only into two or three smaller ones, each of which vanishes into the air without any cause or reason for such unaccountable conduct—unless that the mass of leaves transfixed upon it or tied to it, entirely dependent on its single strength, have been too much, as well they may be, for its powers of solitary endurance. This total ignorance of tree structure is shown throughout their works. The “Sinon before Priam” is an excellent instance of it in a really fine work of Claude’s.

But it is only by looking over the sketches of Claude, § 11. All these errors especially shown in Claude’s sketches, and concentrated in a work of G. Poussin’s. in the British Museum, that a complete and just idea is to be formed of his capacities of error; for the feeling and arrangement of many of them is that of an advanced age, so that we can scarcely set them down for what they resemble—the work of a boy of ten years old; and the drawing being seen, without any aids of tone or colour to set it off, shows in its naked falsehood. The windy landscape of Poussin, also, opposite the Dido and Eneas, in the National Gallery, presents us, in the foreground tree, with a piece of atrocity which I think, to any person who candidly considers it, may save me all further trouble of demonstrating the errors of ancient art. I do not, in the

least suspect the picture: the tones of it, and much of the handling, are masterly. I believe it will, some time or another, if people ever begin to think with their own heads, and see with their own eyes, be the death-warrant of Gaspar's reputation, signed with his own hand. That foreground tree comprises every conceivable violation of truth, which the human hand can commit, or head invent, in drawing a tree—except only, that it is not drawn root uppermost. It has no bark, no roughness nor character of stem; its boughs do not grow out of each other, but are stuck into each other; they ramify without diminishing, diminish without ramifying, are terminated by no complicated sprays, have their leaves tied to their ends, like the heads of Dutch brooms; and finally, and chiefly, they are evidently not made of wood, but of some soft elastic substance, which the wind can stretch out as it pleases, for there is not a vestige of an angle in any one of them.—

§ 12. Impossibility of the angles of boughs being taken out of them by wind.

Now, the fiercest wind that ever blew upon the earth, could not take the angles out of the bough of a tree an inch thick. The whole bough bends together, retaining its elbows, and angles, and natural form, but affected throughout with curvature in each of its parts and joints. That part of it which was before perpendicular, being bent aside, and that which was before sloping, being bent into still greater inclination, the angle at which the two parts meet, remains the same; or, if the strain be put in the opposite direction, the bough will break long before it loses its angle. You will find it difficult to bend the angles out of the youngest sapling, if they be marked; and absolutely impossible, with a strong bough. You may break it, but you will not destroy its angles. And if you watch a tree in the wildest storm, you will find that though all its boughs are bending, none lose their character but the utmost shoots and sapling spray. Hence Gaspar Poussin, by his bad drawing, does not make his storm strong, but

his tree weak: he does not make his gust violent, but his boughs of Indian-rubber.

In passing to the works of Turner, I have little more to do than to name the most characteristic pictures, for the truths I have been pointing out are so palpable and evident that the reader can decide for himself in a moment where they exist, and where they are wanting. The "Crossing of the Brook" will probably be the first which will occur to the minds of those best acquainted with Turner's works, and indeed the stems on the extreme left of the picture, especially the fainter ones entangled behind the dark tree, and the vistas of interwoven boughs which retire in the centre are above all praise for grace and truth. These, and the light branches on the left in the "Mercury and Argus," may be given as standards of the utmost possible refinement and fidelity in tree-drawing, carried out to the last fibres of the leaflets. I am desirous, however, when it is possible, to give references to engravings as well as to original works, and neither of these have been so well rendered by the engraver as a little passage of thicket on the right in the "Chain-bridge over the Tees," of the England series. This piece of drawing is peculiarly expressive of the complexity, entanglement, and aerial relation of which we have just been speaking. The eye is lost in its exquisite multiplicity, yet you can go through among the boughs, in and out, catching a leaf here and a sunbeam there,—now a shadow, and now a stem, until you come out at the cliff on the other side, and there is not one of those countless stems at the same distance with another, not one that you do not leave behind you before you get to the next, however confused and entangled you may be with their intersections and their multitude. Compare this with Gaspar's tree in the "La Riccia," and decide for yourself which is truth. One, infinite, graceful, penetrable, interwoven, sun-lighted, alive; the other, three brown

§ 13. Unity of all truth in the works of Turner. "Crossing the Brook."

strokes of paint, at precisely the same distance from the eye, without one intersection, without one cast shadow, and without one ramification to carry the foliage.

§ 14. "Chiefswood Cottage,"
"Chateau de
la Belle Gabrielle," &c.

The vignette of "Chiefswood Cottage," in the illustrations to Scott, is peculiarly interesting as an illustration of all that we have been saying of the tapering of trunks. One stem, on the left, is made to taper in perspective, by receding from the eye, as well as by sending off quantities of brushwood at its base, and observe how it contrasts with and sets off the forms of all the others. Look at the stems of the dark trees on the right, how they rise without the least diminution, although so tall, till they fork, note the exquisite observance of proportion in the diminution of every spray at the very instant of dividing, the inconceivable and countless complexity, depth, ærial recession, and grace of the sprays themselves. This vignette, and the "Chateau de la Belle Gabrielle" always appear to me about the two most finished pieces of bough-drawing that Turner has produced. We should, however, associate with them the group of waving willows in the "Warwick," (England series), the "Dartmouth Cove," with its dark, gnarled trunk and delicate springing stems above the flag, (also a picture to be closely studied with reference to bough anatomy;) the branching stems above the river in the "Durham," the noble group of full-grown trees in the "Kelso," and, perhaps grander than all, the tall mass of foliage in the "Bolton Abbey."

§ 15. Character
of leafage. Its
singular irregularity.

Such being the truth of the stems and branches, as represented by modern painters, let us see whether they are equally faithful in foliage, and whether the old masters atone by the leaves for the errors of the stems. Nature's great aim, in arranging her leaves, as in every thing else, is to get symmetry and variety together, to make the symmetry be *felt*, but only the variety *seen*. Consequently, though she ranges her leaves on their

individual sprays with exquisite regularity, she always contrives to disguise that regularity in their united effect. For as in every group of leaves, some are seen sideways, forming merely long lines, some foreshortened, some crossing each other, every one differently turned and placed from all the others, the forms of the leaves, though in themselves similar, give rise to a thousand strange and differing forms in the group, and the shadows of some, passing over the others, still farther disguise and confuse the mass, until the eye can distinguish nothing but a graceful and flexible disorder of innumerable forms, with here and there a perfect leaf on the extremity, or a symmetrical association of one or two, just enough to mark the specific character and to give unity and grace, but never enough to repeat in one group, what was done in another, never enough to prevent the eye from feeling that however regular and mathematical may be the structure of parts, what is composed out of them is as various and infinite as any other part of nature. Nor does this take place in general effect only. Break off an elm bough, three feet long, in full leaf, and lay it on the table before you, and try to draw it, leaf for leaf. It is ten to one if in the whole bough (provided you don't twist it about as you work) you find one form of a leaf exactly like another; perhaps you will not even have *one* complete. Every leaf will be oblique, or foreshortened, or curled, or crossed by another, or shaded by another, or have something or other the matter with it, and though the whole bough will look graceful and symmetrical, you will scarcely be able to tell how or why it does so, since there is not one line of it like another. Now go to Gaspar Poussin, and take one of his sprays where they come against the sky: you may count it all round, one, two, three, four, one bunch; five, six, seven, eight, two bunches; nine, ten, eleven, twelve, three bunches; with four leaves each,—and such leaves! every one pre-

§ 16. Perfect
regularity of
Poussin.

cisely the same as its neighbour, blunt and round at the end (where every forest leaf is sharp, except that of the fig-tree), tied together by the roots, and so fastened on to the demoniacal claws above described, one bunch to each claw, and behold a tree !

§ 17. Exceed-
ing intricacy of
nature's foliage.

But if nature is so various when you have a bough on the table before you, what must she be when she retires from you, and gives you her whole mass and multitude? The leaves then at the extremities become as fine as dust, a mere confusion of points and lines between you and the sky, a confusion which you might as well hope to draw sea-sand particle by particle, as to imitate leaf for leaf. This, as it comes down into the body of the tree, gets closer, but never opaque ; it is always transparent, with crumbling lights in it letting you through to the sky ; then, out of this, come, heavier and heavier, the masses of illumined foliage, all dazzling and inextricable, save here and there a single leaf on the extremities ; then, under these, you get deep passages of broken, irregular gloom, passing into transparent, green-lighted, misty hollows, the twisted stems glancing through them in their pale and entangled infinity, and the shafted sunbeams, rained from above, running along the lustrous leaves for an instant, then lost, then caught again on some emerald bank or knotted root, to be sent up again with a faint reflex on the white under sides of dim groups of drooping foliage, the shadows of the upper boughs running in grey network down the glossy stems, and resting in quiet chequers upon the glittering earth, but all penetrable and transparent, and in proportion, inextricable and incomprehensible, except where across the labyrinth and the mystery of the dazzling light and dream-like shadow, falls, close to us, some solitary spray, some wreath of two or three motionless large leaves, the type and embodying of all that in the rest we feel and imagine, but can never see.

Now, with thus much of nature in your mind, go to Gaspar Poussin's "View near Albano," in the National Gallery. It is the very subject to unite all these effects, —a sloping bank shaded with intertwined forest;—and what has Gaspar given us? A mass of smooth, opaque, varnished brown, without one interstice, one change of hue, or any vestige of leafy structure in its interior, or in those parts of it, I should say, which are intended to represent interior; but out of it, over it rather, at regular intervals, we have circular groups of greenish touches, always the same in size, shape, and distance from each other, containing so exactly the same number of touches each, that you cannot tell one from another. There are eight or nine and thirty of them, laid over each other like fish-scales, the shade being most carefully made darker and darker as it recedes from each until it comes to the edge of the next, against which it cuts in the same sharp circular line, and then begins to decline again, until the canvass is covered, with about as much intelligence or feeling of art as a house-painter has in marbling a wainscot, or a weaver in repeating an ornamental pattern. What is there in this, which the most determined prejudice in favour of the old masters can for a moment suppose to resemble trees? It is exactly what the most ignorant beginner, trying to make a complete drawing, would lay down,—exactly the conception of trees which we have in the works of our worst drawing-masters, where the shade is laid on with the black lead and stump, and every human power exerted to make it look like a kitchen-grate well polished.

§ 18. How contradicted by the tree patterns of G. Poussin.

Oppose to this the drawing even of our somewhat inferior tree-painters. I will not insult Harding by mentioning his work after it, but take Creswick, for instance, and match one of his sparkling bits of green leafage with this tree pattern of Poussin's. I do not say there is not a dignity and impressiveness about the

§ 19. How followed by Creswick.

old landscape, owing to its simplicity; and I am very far from calling Creswick's good tree-painting, it is false in colour and deficient in mass and freedom, and has many other defects, but it is the work of a man who has sought earnestly for truth; and who, with one thought or memory of nature in his heart, could look at the two landscapes, and receive Poussin's with ordinary patience? Take Creswick in black and white, where he is unembarrassed by his fondness for pea-green, the illustrations for instance to the "Nut-brown Maid," in the Book of English Ballads. Look at the intricacy and fulness of the dark oak foliage where it bends over the brook, see how you can go through it, and into it, and come out behind it to the quiet bit of sky. Observe the grey, ærial transparency of the stunted copse on the left, and the entangling of the boughs where the light near foliage detaches itself. Above all, note the forms of the masses of light. Not things like scales or shells, sharp at the edge and flat in the middle, but irregular and rounded, stealing in and out accidentally from the shadow, and presenting, as the masses of all trees do, in general outline, a resemblance to the specific forms of the leaves of which they are composed. Turn over the page, and look into the weaving of the foliage and sprays against the dark night-sky, how near they are, yet how untraceable; see how the moonlight creeps up underneath them, trembling and shivering on the silver boughs above; note also, the descending bit of ivy on the left, of which only two leaves are made out, and the rest is confusion, or tells only in the moonlight like faint flakes of snow.

§ 20. Perfect
unity in na-
ture's foliage.

But nature observes another principle in her foliage more important even than its intricacy. She always secures an exceeding harmony and repose. She is *so* intricate that her minuteness of parts becomes to the eye, at a little distance, one united veil or cloud of leaves, to destroy the evenness of which is perhaps a

greater fault than to destroy its transparency. Look at Creswick's oak again, in its dark parts. Intricate as it is, all is blended into a cloud-like harmony of shade, which becomes fainter and fainter, as it retires, with the most delicate flatness and unity of tone. And it is by this kind of vaporescence, so to speak, by this flat, misty unison of parts, that nature, and her faithful followers, are enabled to keep the eye in perfect repose in the midst of profusion, and to display beauty of form, wherever they choose, to the greatest possible advantage, by throwing it across some quiet, visionary passage of dimness and rest.

Now it is here that Hobbima and Both fail. They can paint oak leafage faithfully, but do not know where to stop, and by doing too much, lose the truth of all,—lose the very truth of detail at which they aim, for all their minute work only gives two leaves to nature's twenty. They are evidently incapable of even thinking of a tree, much more of drawing it, except leaf by leaf; they have no notion nor sense of simplicity, mass, or obscurity, and when they come to distance, where it is totally impossible that leaves should be separately seen, yet being incapable of conceiving or rendering the grand and quiet forms of truth, they are reduced to paint their bushes with dots and touches expressive of leaves three feet broad each.* Nevertheless there is a genuine aim in their works, and their failure is rather to be attributed to ignorance of art, than to such want of sense for nature as we find in Claude or Poussin; and when they come close home, we sometimes receive from them fine passages of mechanical truth.

But let us oppose to their works the group of trees on the left in Turner's "Marly." We have there perfect and ceaseless intricacy to oppose to Poussin,—perfect and unbroken repose, to oppose to Hobbima; and in the unity of these the perfection of truth. This

§ 21. Total want of it in Both and Hobbima.

§ 22. How rendered by Turner.

* Compare Sec. II., Chap. IV., § 16.

group may be taken as a fair standard of Turner's tree-painting. We have in it the admirably drawn stems, instead of the claws or the serpents; full, transparent, boundless intricacy, instead of the shell pattern, and misty depth of intermingled light and leafage, instead of perpetual repetition of one mechanical touch.

§ 23. The near leafage of Claude. His middle distances are good.

I have already spoken (Sec. II. Ch. IV. § 15) of the way in which mystery and intricacy are carried even into the nearest leaves of the foreground, and noticed the want of such intricacy even in the best works of the old masters. Claude's are particularly deficient, for by representing every particular leaf of them, or trying to do so, he makes nature finite, and even his nearest bits of leafage are utterly false, for they have neither shadows modifying their form, (compare Sec. II. Chap. III. § 7.) nor sparkling lights, nor confused intersections of their own forms and lines, and the perpetual repetition of the same shape of leaves and the same arrangement, relieved from a black ground, is more like an ornamental pattern for dress than the painting of a foreground. Nevertheless, the foliage of Claude, in his middle distances, is the finest and truest part of his pictures, and on the whole, affords the best example of good drawing to be found in ancient art. It is always false in colour, and has not boughs enough amongst it, and the stems commonly look a great deal nearer than any part of it, but it is still graceful, flexible, abundant, intricate; and in all but colour and connection with stems, very nearly right. Of the perfect painting of thick, leafy foreground, Turner's "Mercury and Argus," and "Okehampton," are the standards.

§ 24. Universal termination of trees in symmetrical curves. Their ideal form.

The last and most important truth to be observed respecting trees, is that their boughs always, in finely grown individuals, bear among themselves such a ratio of length as to describe with their extremities a symmetrical curve, constant for each species, and within this curve all the irregularities, segments, and divisions

of the tree are included, each bough reaching the limit with its extremity, but not passing it. When a tree is perfectly grown, each bough starts from the trunk with just so much wood as, allowing for constant ramification, will enable it to reach the terminal line, or if by mistake, it start with too little, it will proceed without ramifying till within a distance where it may safely divide; if on the contrary it start with too much, it will ramify quickly and constantly, or, to express the real operation more accurately, each bough, growing on so as to keep even with its neighbours, takes so much wood from the trunk as is sufficient to enable it to do so, more or less in proportion as it ramifies fast or slowly. In badly grown trees, the boughs are apt to fall short of the curve, or at least, there are so many jags and openings that its symmetry is interrupted, and in young trees, the impatience of the upper shoots frequently breaks the line; but in perfect and mature trees, every bough does its duty completely, and the line of curve is quite filled up, and the mass within it unbroken, so that the tree assumes the shape of a dome, as in the oak, or, in tall trees, of a pear, with the stalk downmost. This then is the ideal or perfect form of a tree, that to which all approximate, while few attain. The old masters paid no attention whatsoever to this great principle. They swing their boughs about, anywhere and everywhere; each stops or goes on just as it likes, nor will it be possible, in any of their works, to find a single example in which any symmetrical curve is indicated by the extremities.*

§25. Altogether unobserved by the old masters. Always given by Turner.

* Perhaps, in some instances, this may be the case with the trees of Nicholas Poussin; but even with him, the boughs only touch the line of limit with their central *points* of extremity, and are not *sectors* of the great curve—forming a part of it with expanded extremities, as in nature. Draw a few straight lines, from the centre to the circumference of a circle. The forms included between them, are the forms of the individual boughs of a fine tree, with all their ramifications (only the external curve is not a circle, but more frequently two parabolas—which, I be-

But I need scarcely tell any one in the slightest degree acquainted with the works of Turner, how rigidly and constantly he adheres to this principle of nature; taking in his highest compositions the perfect ideal form, every spray being graceful and varied in itself, but inevitably terminating at the assigned limit, and filling up the curve without break or gap; in his lower works, taking less perfect form, but invariably hinting the constant tendency in all, and thus, in spite of his abundant complexity, he arranges his trees under simpler and grander forms than any other artist, even among the moderns. The tree in the "Mercury and Argus" is the most perfect example I remember of the pure ideal form.

§ 26. Connection in foliage between truth and beauty.

Let me then close the investigation of the truth of nature with this link between the true and the beautiful, for we may always assume that the ideal or perfect form of any object is the most beautiful it can possibly assume, and that it can be only diseased taste in us which dislikes it, if we ever find ourselves doing so. And I shall prove hereafter that this perfect form of trees is not only the most beautiful which *they* can assume, but one of the most perfect which can be presented to the eye by any means or object. And especially in foliage, nothing can be true which is not beautiful, so that we shall be far better able to trace the essential qualities of truth in tree-drawing, and especially the particular power of Turner, when we are enabled to speak of grace as well as of accuracy.

§ 27. Foliage of Harding, Fielding, and other modern painters.

We have before expressed our admiration of the works of J. D. Harding for general drawing of trees, and we may once again refer to them as an illustration of every truth we have been pointing out in foliage. We only wish they were carried a little farther and

lieve, it is in the oak—or an ellipse). But each bough of the old masters is club-shaped, and broadest, not at the outside of the tree, but a little way towards its centre.

finer. We should enjoy a little more of the making out which we find in Claude's foreground, to give greater value to his brilliant execution; and we should like a little more attention paid to specific character of trees, and to the designing of the boughs. Harding's boughs are always *right*, always flexible and growing; but they are not always so put together, that we wonder how anything so beautiful could ever have been conceived. There is not a distinct design of perfect beauty in every spray, which there always is in nature.

Callcott's foliage is very refined and ideal, very faultless, though apt to be dreadfully cold in colour. Stanfield is sometimes awkward, though not exactly wrong; he inserted his stone-pine into the road at Pozzuoli like a sign-post. Copley Fielding is very wild, intricate, and graceful, wanting only in dignity; he should also remember that leaves, here and there, both have and show sharp edges. Creswick I have already noticed. Cattermole is very grand in his conception of form; and many others of our water-colour painters have produced instructive passages.*

* It may not, perhaps, be out of place to protest against the mode in which the foliage is executed in Mr. Moon's publication of Roberts's Eastern Sketches. So magnificent a work should have been put only into first-rate hands, and there is much about it unsatisfactory in every way; partly from attempting too much, but chiefly from the incapability of the hands employed on the landscape. No one but Harding should have executed the foliage; and, at any rate, a good draughtsman should have been secured for the foregrounds. I know not whose work they are; but they are a libel on Mr. Roberts, whose foliage is always beautiful and artistical, if not very carefully studied.

CHAPTER II.

GENERAL REMARKS RESPECTING THE TRUTH OF TURNER.

§ 1. No necessity of entering into discussion of architectural truth.

WE have now arrived at some general conception of the extent of Turner's knowledge, and the truth of his practice, by the deliberate examination of the characteristics of the four great elements of landscape,—sky, earth, water and vegetation. I have not thought it necessary to devote a chapter to architecture, because there is nothing in the nature of the thing itself, with which the ordinary observer is not sufficiently acquainted to be capable of forming a pretty accurate judgment of the truth of its representation; and the difference between one artist and another, in architectural drawing, does not depend so much upon knowledge of actual form, in which it is here impossible grossly to err, as on the representation of that form with more able application of the general laws of chiaroscuro and colour, or with greater precision and delicacy of execution. The difference between Roberts and Turner, as architectural draughtsmen, does not depend on any greater knowledge in one or another of the channelling of triglyphs, or the curvature of volutes, but on the application of general principles of art to develope and adorn such truths. The execution which is good and desirable in drawing a stone on the ground channelled by frost, is equally good and desirable in drawing a stone in a building channelled by the chisel. He who can do the

§ 2. Because dependent only on the artist's mode of execution and knowledge of general principles.

one can far more easily do the other, for architecture requires only a simple and straight-forward application of those rules of which every other material object of a landscape has required a most difficult and complicated application. Consequently its general truths are within the reach of even the most inferior draughtsmen, and are at the fingers' ends of every engineer's apprentice. It is disgraceful to misrepresent them, but it is no honour to draw them well. It is disgraceful, for instance, that any man should commit such palpable and atrocious errors in ordinary perspective as are seen in the quay in Claude's sea-piece, No. 14, National Gallery, or in the curved portico of No. 30; but still these are not points to be taken into consideration as having anything to do with artistical rank, just as, though we should say it was disgraceful if a great poet could not spell, we should not consider such a defect as in any way taking from his poetical rank. There is nothing particularly belonging to architecture, as such, which it is any credit to an artist to observe or represent, it is only a simple and clear field for the manifestation of his knowledge of general laws. Any surveyor or engineer could have drawn the steps and balustrade in the "Hero and Leander," as well as Turner has; but there is no man living but himself who could have thrown the accidental shadows upon them.

I may, however, refer to what has already been said upon the subject in Sect. II. Chap. IV. § 6, 12, 13, (and note) and 14, and I may point for general illustration of Turner's power as an architectural draughtsman to the front of "Rouen Cathedral," engraved in the Rivers of France, and to the "Ely" in the England. I know nothing in art which can be set beside the former of these for overwhelming grandeur and simplicity of effect, and inexhaustible intricacy of parts. The "Modern Italy" may be adduced as a standard of the drawing of architectural distance. But so much of the

§ 3. Notice of a few characteristic examples of Turner's architecture.

excellence of all these pictures depends, partly on considerations of principles of beauty, not yet developed, partly on expression of local character, and systematized illustration of part by part, of which we cannot yet take cognizance, that we should only do harm by entering upon close criticism of these works at present. I have only therefore a few remarks to make upon the general character of all those truths which we have been hitherto endeavouring to explain and illustrate.

§ 4. Extreme difficulty of illustrating or explaining the highest truth.

The difference in the accuracy of the lines of the Torso of the Vatican, (the Maestro of M. Angelo,) from those in one of M. Angelo's finest works, could perhaps scarcely be appreciated by any eye or feeling undisciplined by the most perfect and practical anatomical knowledge. It rests on points of such traceless and refined delicacy, that though we feel them in the result, we cannot follow them in the details. Yet they are such and so great, as to place the Torso alone in art, solitary and supreme, while the finest of M. Angelo's works, considered with respect to truth alone, are said to be only on a level with antiques of the second class, under the Apollo and the Venus; that is, two classes or grades below the Torso. But suppose the best sculptor in the world, possessing the most entire appreciation of the excellence of the Torso, were to sit down, pen in hand, to try and tell us, wherein the peculiar truth of each line consisted? Could any words that he could use, make us feel the hair's-breadth of depth and distance on which all depends? or end in anything more than bare assertions of the inferiority of this line to that, which if we did not perceive for ourselves, no explanation could ever illustrate to us. He might as well endeavour to explain to us by words some taste or other subject of sense, of which we had no experience. And so it is with all truths of the highest order; they are separated from those of average precision by points of extreme delicacy, which none but the cultivated eye

can in the least feel, and to express which, all words are absolutely meaningless and useless. Consequently in all that I have been saying of the truth of artists, I have been able to point out only coarse, broad and explicable matters; I have been perfectly unable to express (and indeed I have made no endeavour to express) the finely drawn and distinguished truth in which all the real excellence of art consists. All those truths which I have been able to explain and demonstrate in Turner, are such as any artist of ordinary powers of observation ought to be capable of rendering. It is disgraceful to omit them; but it is no very great credit to observe them. I have indeed proved that they have been neglected, and disgracefully so, by those men who are commonly considered the Fathers of Art; but in showing that they have been observed by Turner, I have only proved him to be *above* other men in knowledge of truth, I have not given any conception of his own positive rank as a Painter of Nature. But it stands to reason, that the men, who in broad, simple, and demonstrable matters are perpetually violating truth, will not be particularly accurate or careful in carrying out delicate and refined, and undemonstrable matters; and it stands equally to reason, that the man, who, as far as argument or demonstration can go, is found invariably truthful, will, in all probability, be truthful to the last line, and shadow of a line. And such is, indeed, the case with every touch of this consummate artist; the essential excellence—all that constitutes the real and exceeding value of his works, is beyond and above expression: it is a truth inherent in every line, and breathing in every hue, too delicate and exquisite to admit of any kind of proof, nor to be ascertained except by the highest of tests—the keen feeling attained by extended knowledge and long study. Two lines are laid on canvass; one is right and another wrong. There is no difference between them appreciable by the compasses—none appreciable by the ordi-

§ 5. The *positive* rank of Turner is in no degree shown in the foregoing pages, but only his relative rank.

§ 6. The exceeding refinement of his truth.

§ 7. There is nothing in his works which can be enjoyed without knowledge.

§ 8. And nothing which knowledge will not enable us to enjoy.

nary eye—none which can be pointed out, if it is not seen. One person feels it:—another does not; but the feeling or sight of the one can by no words be communicated to the other: it would be unjust if it could, for that feeling and sight have been the reward of years of labour. And there is, indeed, nothing in Turner,—not one dot nor line, whose meaning can be understood without knowledge; because he never aims at sensual impressions, but at the deep final truth, which only meditation can discover, and only experience recognize. There is nothing done or omitted by him, which does not imply such a comparison of ends, such rejection of the least worthy (as far as they are incompatible with the rest), such careful selection and arrangement of all that can be united, as can only be enjoyed by minds capable of going through the same process, and discovering the reasons for the choice. And, as there is nothing in his works which can be enjoyed without knowledge, so there is nothing in them which knowledge will not enable us to enjoy. There is no test of our acquaintance with Nature, so absolute and unfailing, as the degree of admiration we feel for Turner's painting. Precisely as we are shallow in our knowledge, vulgar in our feeling, and contracted in our views of principles, will the works of this artist be stumbling-blocks or foolishness to us:—precisely in the degree in which we are familiar with Nature, constant in our observation of her, and enlarged in our understanding of her, will they expand before our eyes into glory and beauty. In every new insight which we obtain into the works of God, in every new idea which we receive from His creation, we shall find ourselves possessed of an interpretation and a guide to something in Turner's works which we had not before understood. We may range over Europe, from shore to shore; and from every rock that we tread upon, every sky that passes over our heads, every local form of vegetation or of soil, we

shall receive fresh illustration of his principles—fresh confirmation of his facts. We shall feel, wherever we go, that he has been there before us—whatever we see, that he has seen and seized before us; and we shall at last cease the investigation, with a well-grounded trust, that whatever we have been unable to account for, and what we still dislike in his works, has reason for it, and foundation like the rest; and that even where he has failed or erred, there is a beauty in the failure, which none are able to equal, and a dignity in the error, which none are worthy to reprove.

There has been marked and constant progress in his mind; he has not, like some few artists, been without childhood, his course of study has been as evidently as it has been swiftly, progressive, and in different stages of the struggle, sometimes one order of truth, sometime another, has been aimed at or omitted. But from the beginning to the present height of his career, he has never sacrificed a greater truth to a less. As he advanced, the previous knowledge or attainment was absorbed in what succeeded, or abandoned only if incompatible, and never abandoned without a gain; and his present works present the sum and perfection of his accumulated knowledge, delivered with the impatience and passion of one who feels too much, and knows too much, and has too little time to say it in, to pause for expression or ponder over his syllables. There is in them the obscurity, but the truth, of prophecy; the instinctive and burning language, which would express less if it uttered more, which is indistinct only by its fulness, and dark with its abundant meaning. He feels now, with long-trained vividness and keenness of sense, too bitterly, the impotence of the hand, and the vainness of the colour to catch one shadow or one image of the glory which God has revealed to him. He has dwelt and communed with Nature all the days of his life; he knows her now too well, he cannot palter over

§ 9. His former rank and progress.

§ 10. Standing of his present works. Their mystery is the consequence of their fulness.

the material littlenesses of her outward form, he must give her soul, or he has done nothing, and he cannot do this with the flax, and the earth, and the oil. "I cannot gather the sunbeams out of the east, or I would make *them* tell you what I have seen; but read this, and interpret this, and let us remember together. I cannot gather the gloom out of the night-sky, or I would make that teach you what I have seen; but read this and interpret this, and let us feel together. And if you have not that within you which I can summon to my aid, if you have not the sun in your spirit, and the passion in your heart, which my words may awaken, though they be indistinct and swift, leave me; for I will give you no patient mockery, no laborious insult of that glorious Nature, whose I am and whom I serve. Let other servants imitate the voice and the gesture of their master, while they forget his message. Hear that message from me; but remember, that the teaching of Divine truth must still be a mystery."

CHAPTER III.

CONCLUSION.—MODERN ART AND MODERN CRITICISM.

WE have only, in conclusion, to offer a few general remarks respecting modern art and modern criticism.

We wish, in the first place, to remove the appearance of invidiousness and partiality which the constant prominence given in the present portion of the work to the productions of one artist, can scarcely fail of bearing in the minds of most readers. When we pass to the examination of what is beautiful and expressive in art, we shall frequently find distinctive qualities in the minds even of inferior artists, which have led them to the pursuit and embodying of particular trains of thought, altogether different from those which direct the compositions of other men, and incapable of comparison with them. Now, when this is the case, we should consider it in the highest degree both invidious and illogical, to say of such different modes of exertion of the intellect, that one is in all points greater or nobler than another. We shall probably find something, in the working of all minds, which has an end and a power peculiar to itself, and which is deserving of free and full admiration, without any reference whatsoever to what has, in other fields, been accomplished by other modes of thought, and directions of aim. We shall, indeed, find a wider range and grasp in one man than in another; but yet it will be our own

§ 1. The entire prominence hitherto given to the works of one artist caused only by our not being able to take cognizance of character.

§ 2. The feelings of different artists are incapable of full comparison.

§ 3. But the fidelity and truth of each are capable of real comparison.

fault if we do not discover something in the most limited range of mind, which is different from, and in its way, better than any thing presented to us by the more grasping intellect. We all know that the nightingale sings more nobly than the lark; but who, therefore, would wish the lark not to sing, or would deny that it had a character of its own, which bore a part among the melodies of creation no less essential than that of the more richly-gifted bird? And thus we shall find and feel that whatever difference may exist between the intellectual powers of one artist and another, yet wherever there is any true genius, (true sensibility, that is,) there will be some peculiar lesson which even the humblest will teach us more sweetly and perfectly than those far above them in prouder attributes of mind; and we should be as mistaken as we should be unjust and invidious, if we refused to receive this their peculiar message with gratitude and veneration, merely because it was a sentence and not a volume. But the case is different when we examine their relative fidelity to given facts. That fidelity depends on no peculiar modes of thought or habits of character, it is the result of keen sensibility, combined with high powers of memory and association. These qualities, as such, are the same in all men; character or feeling may direct their choice to this or that object, but the fidelity with which they treat either the one or the other, is dependent on those simple powers of sense and intellect which are like and comparable in all, and of which we can always say that they are greater in this man, or less in that, without reference to the character of the individual. Those feelings which direct Cox to the painting of wild, weedy banks and cool, melting skies, and those which directed Barret to the painting of glowing foliage and melancholy twilight, are both just and beautiful in their way, and are both worthy of high praise and gratitude, without necessity, nay, without

proper possibility of comparing one with the other. But the degree of fidelity with which the leaves of the one, and the light of the other, are rendered, depends upon faculties of sight, sense, and memory common to both, and perfectly comparable, and we may say fearlessly, and without injustice, that one or the other, as the case may be, is more faithful in that which they have chosen to represent. It is also to be remembered that these faculties of sense and memory are not partial in their effect, they will not induce fidelity in the rendering of one class of object, and fail of doing so in another. They act equally, and with equal results, whatever may be the matter subjected to them; the same delicate sense which perceives the utmost grace of the fibres of a tree, will be equally unerring in tracing the character of cloud; and the quick memory which seizes and retains the circumstances of a flying effect of shadow or colour, will be equally effectual in fixing the impression of the instantaneous form of a moving figure or a breaking wave. There are indeed one or two broad distinctions in the nature of the senses,—a sensibility to colour, for instance, being very different from a sensibility to form; so that a man may possess one without the other, and an artist may succeed in mere imitation of what is before him, of air, sunlight, &c., without possessing sensibility at all. But wherever we have, in the drawing of any one object, sufficient evidence of real intellectual power, of the sense which perceives the essential qualities of a thing, and the judgment which arranges them so as to illustrate each other, we may be quite certain that the same sense and judgment will operate equally on whatever is subjected to them, and that the artist will be equally great and masterly in his drawing of all that he attempts. Hence we may be quite sure that wherever an artist appears to be truthful in one branch of art, and not in another, the apparent truth is either owing to some trickery of imitation, or

§ 4. Especially because they are equally manifested in the treatment of all subjects.

§ 5. No man draws one thing well, if he can draw nothing else.

is not so great as we suppose it to be. In nine cases out of ten, people who are celebrated for drawing only one thing, and *can* only draw one thing, draw that one thing worse than anybody else. An artist may indeed confine himself to a limited range of subject, but if he be really true in his rendering of this, his power of doing more will be perpetually showing itself in accessories and minor points. There are few men, for instance, more limited in subject than Hunt, and yet I do not think there is another man in the old water-colour, with so keen an eye for truth, or with power so universal. And this is the reason for the exceeding prominence which in the foregoing investigation one or two artists have always assumed over the rest, for the habits of accurate observation and delicate powers of hand which they possess, have equal effect, and maintain the same superiority in their works, to whatever class of subject they may be directed. And thus we have been compelled, however unwillingly, to pass hastily by the works of many gifted men, because, however pure their feeling, or original their conceptions, they were wanting in those faculties of the hand and mind which ensure perfect fidelity to nature: it will be only hereafter, when we are at liberty to take full cognizance of the thought, however feebly it may be clothed in language, that we shall be able to do real justice to the disciples either of modern or of ancient art.

§ 6. General conclusions to be derived from our past investigation.

But as far as we have gone at present, and with respect only to the *material* truth, which is all that we have been able to investigate, the conclusion to which we must be led is as clear as it is inevitable, that modern artists, as a body, are far more just and full in their views of material things than any landscape painters whose works are extant,—but that J. M. W. Turner is the only man who has ever given an entire transcript of the whole system of nature, and is, in this point of

view, the only perfect landscape painter whom the world has ever seen.

Nor are we disposed to recede from our assertion made in Sec. I. Ch. I. § 10, that this material truth is indeed a perfect test of the relative rank of painters, though it does not in itself constitute that rank. We shall be able to prove that truth and beauty, knowledge and imagination, invariably are associated in art, and we shall be able to show that not only in truth to nature, but in all other points, Turner is the greatest landscape painter who has ever lived. But his superiority is, in matters of feeling, one of kind, not of degree. Superiority of degree implies a superseding of others, superiority of kind only sustaining a more important, but not more necessary, part, than others. If *truth* were all that we required from art, all other painters might cast aside their brushes in despair, for all that they have done, he has done more fully and accurately; but when we pass to the higher requirements of art, beauty and character, their contributions are all equally necessary and desirable, because different, and however inferior in position or rank, are still perfect of their kind; their inferiority is only that of the lark to the nightingale, or of the violet to the rose.

Such then is the rank and standing of our modern artists. We have, living with us, and painting for us, the greatest painter of *all* time; a man with whose supremacy of power no intellect of past ages can be put in comparison for a moment. Let us next enquire what is the rank of our critics. Public taste, I believe, as far as it is the encourager and supporter of art, has been the same in all ages,—a fitful and vacillating current of vague impression, perpetually liable to change, subject to epidemic desires, and agitated by infectious passion, the slave of fashion, and the fool of fancy, but yet always distinguishing with singular clear-sightedness, between that which is best and that which

§ 7. Truth, a standard of all excellence.

§ 8. Modern criticism. Changefulness of public taste.

§ 9. Yet associated with a certain degree of judgment.

is worst of the particular class of food which its morbid appetite may call for; never failing to distinguish that which is produced by intellect, from that which is not, though it may be intellect degraded by ministering to its misguided will. Public taste may thus degrade a race of men capable of the highest efforts in art, into the portrait painters of ephemeral fashions, but it will yet not fail of discovering who, among these portrait painters, is the man of most mind. It will separate the man who would have become Buonaroti from the man who would have become Bandinelli, though it will employ both in painting curls, and feathers, and bracelets. Hence, generally speaking, there is no *comparative* injustice done, no false elevation of the fool above the man of mind, provided only that the man of mind will condescend to supply the particular article which the public chooses to want. Of course a thousand modifying circumstances interfere with the action of the general rule, but, taking one case with another, we shall very constantly find the price which the picture commands in the market a pretty fair standard of the artist's rank of intellect. The press, therefore, and all who pretend to lead the public taste, have not so much to direct the multitude whom to go to, as what to ask for. Their business is not to tell us which is our best painter, but to tell us whether we are making our best painter do his best.

§ 10. Duty of the press.

§ 11. Qualifications necessary for discharging it.

Now none are capable of doing this, but those whose principles of judgment are based both on thorough *practical* knowledge of art, and on broad general views of what is true and right, without reference to what has been done at one time or another, or in one school or another. Nothing can be more perilous to the cause of art, than the constant ringing in our painters' ears of the names of great predecessors, as their examples or masters. I had rather hear a great poet, entirely original in his feeling and aim, rebuked or maligned for not

being like Wordsworth or Coleridge, than a great painter criticised for not putting us in mind of Claude or Poussin. But such references to former excellence are the only refuge and resource of persons endeavouring to be critics, without being artists. They cannot tell you whether a thing is right or not; but they can tell you whether it is like something else or not. And the whole tone of modern criticism—as far as it is worthy of being called criticism—sufficiently shows it to proceed entirely from persons altogether unversed in practice, and ignorant of truth, but possessing just enough of feeling to enjoy the solemnity of ancient art, who, not distinguishing that which is really exalted and valuable in the modern school, nor having any just idea of the real ends or capabilities of landscape art, consider nothing right which is not based on the conventional principles of the ancients, and nothing true, which has more of nature in it than of Claude. But it is a strange thing, that while the noble and unequalled works of modern landscape painters are thus maligned and misunderstood, our historical painters—such as we have—are permitted to pander more fatally every year to the vicious English taste, which can enjoy nothing but what is theatrical, entirely unchastised, nay, encouraged and lauded by the very men who endeavour to hamper our great landscape painters with rules derived from consecrated blunders. The very critic who has just passed one of the noblest works of Turner—that is to say, a masterpiece of art, to which Time can show no parallel—with a ribald jest, and who can find nothing better to say of a perfect composition of Callcott, but that its trees have the “*wavy look* of Claude’s,” will yet stand gaping in admiration before the next piece of dramatic glitter and grimace, suggested by the society, and adorned with the appurtenances of the green room,*

§ 12. General incapability of modern critics.

§ 13. And inconsistency with themselves.

* We have very great respect for Mr. Maclise’s power as a draughtsman, and if we thought that his errors proceeded from weakness, we should

which he finds hung low upon the wall as a brilliant example of the ideal of English art. It is natural enough indeed, that the persons who are disgusted by what is pure and noble, should be delighted with what is vicious and degraded; but it is singular that those who are constantly talking of Claude and Poussin, should never even pretend to a thought of Raffaele. We could excuse them for not comprehending Turner, if they only would apply the same cut-and-dried criticisms where they might be applied with truth, and productive of benefit; but we endure not the paltry compound of ignorance, false taste, and pretension, which assumes the dignity of classical feeling, that it may be able to abuse whatever is above the level of its understanding, but bursts into genuine rapture with all that is meretricious, if sufficiently adapted to the calibre of its comprehension.

§ 14. How the press may really advance the cause of art.

To notice such criticisms, however, is giving them far more importance than they deserve. They can lead none astray but those whose opinions are absolutely valueless, and we did not begin this chapter with any intent of wasting our time on these small critics, but in the hope of pointing out to the periodical press what kind of criticism is now most required by our school of landscape art, and how it may be in their power, if they will, to regulate its impulses, without checking its energies, and really to advance both the cause of the artist, and the taste of the public.

not allude to them; but we most devoutly wish that he would let Shakespeare alone. If the Irish ruffian who appeared in "Hamlet" last year had been gifted with a stout shillelagh; and if his state of prostration had been rationally accounted for, by distinct evidence of a recent "compliment" on the crown; or if the maudlin expression of the young lady christened "Ophelia" had been properly explained by an empty gin-bottle on her lap; we should have thanked him for his powerful delineation both of character and circumstance. But we cannot permit him thus to mislead the English public (unhappily too easily led by any grinning and glittering fantasy), in all their conceptions of the intention of Shakespeare.

One of the most morbid symptoms of the general taste of the present day, is a too great fondness for unfinished works. Brilliancy and rapidity of execution are everywhere sought as the highest good, and so that a picture be cleverly handled as far as it is carried, little regard is paid to its imperfection as a whole. Hence some artists are permitted, and others compelled, to confine themselves to a manner of working altogether destructive of their powers, and to tax their energies, not to concentrate the greatest quantity of thought on the least possible space of canvass, but to produce the greatest quantity of glitter and clap-trap in the shortest possible time. To the idler and the trickster in art, no system can be more advantageous; but to the man who is really desirous of doing something worth having lived for—to a man of industry, energy, or feeling, we believe it to be the cause of the most bitter discouragement. If ever, working upon a favourite subject, or a beloved idea, he is induced to tax his powers to the utmost, and to spend as much time upon his picture as he feels necessary for its perfection, he will not be able to get so high a price for the result, perhaps, of a twelvemonth's thought, as he might have obtained for half-a-dozen sketches with a forenoon's work in each, and he is compelled either to fall back upon mechanism, or to starve. Now the press should especially endeavour to convince the public that by this purchase of imperfect pictures they not only prevent all progress and developement of high talent, and set tricksters and mechanics on a level with men of mind, but defraud and injure themselves. For there is no doubt whatever that, estimated merely by the quantity of pleasure it is capable of conveying, a well-finished picture is worth to its possessor half-a-dozen incomplete ones, and that a perfect drawing is, simply as a source of delight, better worth a hundred guineas than a drawing half as finished is worth thirty. On the other hand the body of our artists should be kept in mind, that by indulging the public with rapid

§ 15. Morbid fondness at the present day for unfinished works;

§ 16. By which the public defraud themselves;

§ 17. And in pandering to which, artists ruin themselves.

and unconsidered work, they are not only depriving themselves of the benefit, which each picture ought to render to them, as a piece of practice and study, but they are destroying the refinement of general taste, and rendering it impossible for themselves ever to find a market for more careful works, supposing that they were inclined to execute them. Nor need any single artist be afraid of setting the example and producing laboured works, at advanced prices, among the cheap, quick drawings of the day. The public will soon find the value of the complete work, and will be more ready to give a large sum for that which is inexhaustible, than a quota of it for that which they are wearied of in a month. The artist who never lets the price command the picture, will soon find the picture command the price. And it ought to be a rule with every painter never to let a picture leave his easel, while it is yet capable of improvement, or of having more thought put into it. The general effect is often perfect and pleasing, and not to be improved upon, when the details and facts are altogether imperfect and unsatisfactory. It may be difficult—perhaps the most difficult task of art—to complete these details, and not to hurt the general effect; but until the artist can do this, his art is imperfect and his picture unfinished. That only is a complete picture, which has both the general wholeness and effect of nature, and the inexhaustible perfection of nature's details. And it is only in the effort to unite these that a painter really improves. By aiming only at details, he becomes a mechanic; by aiming only at generals, he becomes a trickster: his fall in both cases is sure. Two questions the artist has, therefore, always to ask himself,—first, “Is my whole right?” Secondly, “Can my details be added to? Is there a single space in the picture where I can crowd in another thought? Is there a curve in it which I can modulate—a line which I can graduate—a vacancy I can fill? Is there a single spot which the

§ 18. Necessity
of finishing
works of art
perfectly.

eye by any peering or prying, can fathom or exhaust? If so, my picture is imperfect; and if, in modulating the line or filling the vacancy, I hurt the general effect, my art is imperfect."

But, on the other hand, though incomplete pictures ought neither to be produced nor purchased, careful and real *sketches* ought to be valued much more highly than they are. Studies in chalk, of landscape, should form a part of every exhibition, and a room should be allotted to drawings and designs of figures in the Academy. We should be heartily glad to see the room which is now devoted to bad drawings of incorporeal and imaginary architecture—of things which never were, and which, thank Heaven! never will be—occupied instead, by careful studies for historical pictures; not blots of chiaroscuro, but delicate outlines with the pen or crayon.

§ 19. *Sketches* not sufficiently encouraged.

From young artists, in landscape, nothing ought to be tolerated but simple, bonâ fide *imitation* of nature.—They have no business to ape the execution of masters,—to utter weak and disjointed repetitions of other men's words, and mimic the gestures of the preacher, without understanding his meaning, or sharing in his emotions. We do not want their crude ideas of composition, their unformed conceptions of the Beautiful, their unsystematized experiments upon the Sublime. We scorn their velocity; for it is without direction: we reject their decision; for it is without grounds: we condemn their composition; for it is without materials: we reprobate their choice; for it is without comparison.—Their duty is neither to choose, nor compose, nor imagine, nor experimentalize; but to be humble and earnest in following the steps of Nature, and tracing the finger of God. Nothing is so bad a symptom, in the work of young artists, as too much dexterity of handling; for it is a sign that they are satisfied with their work, and have tried to do nothing more than

§ 20. Brilliancy of execution or efforts at invention not to be tolerated in young artists.

§ 21. The duty
and after privi-
leges of all stu-
dents.

they were able to do. Their work should be full of failures; for these are the signs of efforts. They should keep to quiet colours—greys and browns; and, making the early works of Turner their example, as his latest are to be their object of emulation, should go to Nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning, and remember her instruction, rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing; believing all things to be right and good, and rejoicing always in the truth. Then, when their memories are stored, and their imaginations fed, and their hands firm, let them take up the scarlet and the gold, give the reins to their fancy, and show us what their heads are made of. We will follow them wherever they choose to lead; we will check at nothing; they are then our masters, and are fit to be so. They have placed themselves above our criticism, and we will listen to their words, in all faith and humility; but not unless they themselves have bowed before, in the same submission, to a higher Authority and Master.

§ 22. Necessity
among our
greater artists
of more single-
ness of aim.

Among our greater artists, the chief want, at the present day, is that of *solemnity* and definite purpose. We have too much picture-manufacturing, too much making up of lay figures with a certain quantity of foliage, and a certain quantity of sky, and a certain quantity of water,—a little bit of all that is pretty, a little sun, and a little shade,—a touch of pink, and a touch of blue,—a little sentiment, and a little sublimity, and a little humour, and a little antiquarianism,—all very neatly associated in a very charming picture, but not working together for a definite end. Or if the aim be higher, as in the case of Barrett and Varley, we are generally put off with stale repetitions of eternal composition,—a great tree, and some goats, and a bridge and a lake, and the temple at Tivoli, &c. Now we should like to see our artists working out, with all exertion of their

concentrated powers, and application of their most extensive knowledge, such hints of simple and marked individual sentiment as they may get from nature at all places, and at all times. Let them take for their subjects some touch of single, unadulterated feeling, out of the simple and serious parts of nature, looking generally for peace and solemnity rather than for action or magnificence, and let each of their subjects so chosen be different from all the others, but yet part of the same system with all the others, having a planned connection with them, as the sonnets of Wordsworth have among themselves; and then let each of these chants or sonnets be worked out with the most laborious completeness, making separate studies of every inch of it, and going to nature for all the important passages, for she will always supply us with what we want a thousand times better than we can ourselves; and let only seven or eight such pictures be painted in the year, instead of the forty or fifty careless repetitions which we see our more prolific water-colour painters produce at present; and there can be little doubt that the public will soon understand the thing, and enjoy it, and be quite as willing to give one hundred guineas for each complete and studied poem, as they are now to give twenty for a careless and meaningless sketch. And artists who worked on such a principle would soon find that both their artistical powers, and their fancy, and their imagination, were incalculably strengthened by it, and that they acquired by the pursuit of what was simple, solemn, and individual, the power of becoming when they chose, truly magnificent and universal.

§ 23. What should be their general system.

With respect to the great artist whose works have formed the chief subject of this treatise, the duty of the press is clear. He is above all criticism, beyond all animadversion, and beyond all praise. His works are not to be received as in any way subjects or matters of opinion; but of Faith. We are not to approach them

§ 24. Duty of the press with respect to the works of Turner.

to be pleased; but to be taught: not to form a judgment; but to receive a lesson. Our periodical writers, therefore, may save themselves the trouble either of blaming or praising: their duty is not to pronounce opinions upon the work of a man who has walked with nature threescore years; but to impress upon the public the respect with which they are to be received, and to make request to him, on the part of the people of England, that he would now touch no unimportant work—that he would not spend time on slight or small pictures, but give to the nation a series of grand, consistent, systematic, and completed poems, using no means nor vehicle capable of any kind of change. We do not presume to form even so much as a wish, or an idea, respecting the manner or matter of anything proceeding from his hand. We desire only that he would follow out his own thoughts and intents of heart, without reference to any human authority. But we request, in all humility, that those thoughts may be seriously and loftily given; and that the whole power of his unequalled intellect may be exerted in the production of such works as may remain for ever for the teaching of the nations. In all that he says, we believe; in all that he does, we trust. It is therefore that we pray him to utter nothing lightly—to do nothing regardlessly. He stands upon an eminence, from which he looks back over the universe of God, and forward over the generations of men. Let every work of his hand be a history of the one, and a lesson to the other. Let each exertion of his mighty mind be both hymn and prophecy,—adoration to the Deity,—revelation to mankind.

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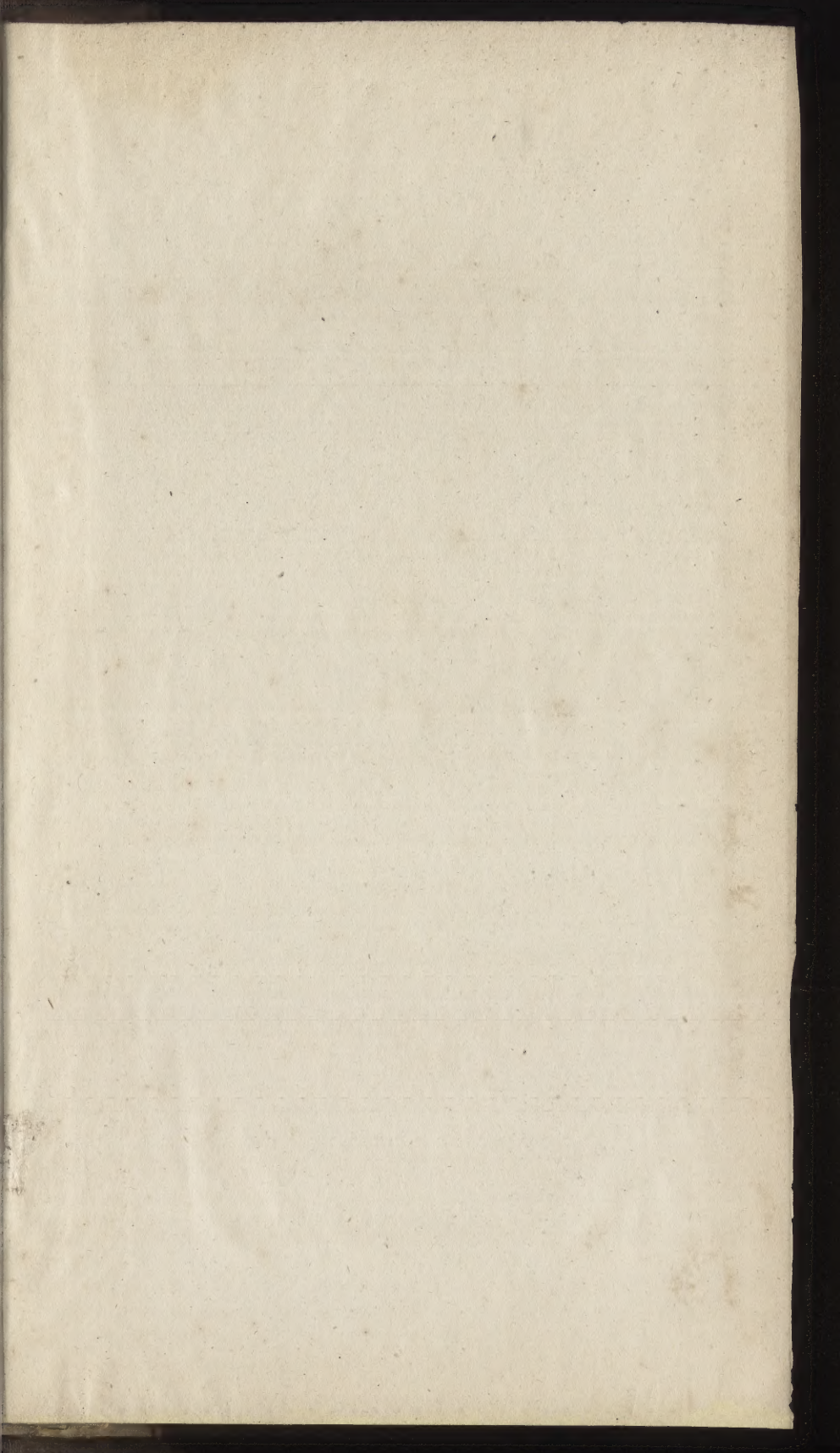
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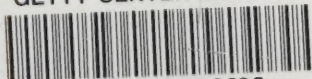
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